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LAME
FELIX

The image shows a dark blue book cover with elaborate gold tooling. A wide rectangular border is composed of a repeating pattern of diagonal gold lines. At each of the four corners, this border is interrupted by a square block containing a stylized eight-pointed star. In the center of the cover is a large, vertically oriented, eight-pointed star-shaped frame. The points of this star are decorated with small circular motifs and the points are connected by a line of small, downward-pointing arrowheads. Inside this central star frame, the words "LAME" and "FELIX" are printed in a gold, serif, all-caps font, stacked one above the other.





‘I never knew a man who could talk to boys like Felix.’—LAME FELIX,
page 13.

(Frontispiece.)

LAME FELIX:

A Book for Boys,

FULL OF

PROVERB AND STORY.

BY

CHARLES BRUCE,

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF A MOSS ROSE," "MY BEAUTIFUL HOME,"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM P. NIMMO.

1872..

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PRINTED BY M'FARLANE AND ERSKINE,
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ST JAMES' SQUARE.



TO
K. WHIBLEY,
AS A SLIGHT, BUT VERY HEARTY EXPRESSION
OF
AFFECTIONATE FRIENDSHIP,
THIS LITTLE WORK IS DEDICATED
BY THE
AUTHOR.



CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

A WORD OR TWO CONCERNING LAME FELIX.

The Withered Branch—The Dead Rose—The Lamé Limb—Consolatory Proverbs for Lamé People—Felix—Susie Evans—Verses for Little Ones—Felix and his Proverbs—Cultivate the habit of Observation—Felix as a Boy—A Life of Adventure—What the Braintree Folk thought of Felix—Johnnie Garter, . . . 1

CHAPTER II.

TOM POTTER, OR THE DOWN-HILL PATH.

The Bané of Braintree—Tom Potter's Tricks—Caught—In the "Lock-up"—Felix and Tom—The Folly of doing Evil—The Indian and his Canoe—The Broad Path—The Captain and his Silks—Good and Bad Thoughts—A Python in the Boat—Telling Lies—Silver-coated Pills—Bad Actions—Bad Companions—Creepers in American Forests—Bogs and Marshes—Jim Wilson—Solomon's Advice, . . . 27

CHAPTER III.

WHAT FELIX SAID CONCERNING CHARACTER.
THE THREE BOATS.

Importance of Character—To what Character is Compared—Weak People—Smashing a Portrait—Characterless Homes—The Waldon Family—A Novel Spring—The Gingham Umbrella—Power to say “No”—Stumbling and Falling—The Young Man who said “No”—Drunkenness—An Incident in an Hospital—Mettlesome Steeds—The Hurricane—Character and the Town-crier—Lord Collingwood—Beating a Steak Tender—The Lawyer and the Bible—The Three Boats,	33
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE REEK FAMILY, OR GETTING ON.

Mother and Father—Family Traits—Stephen Reek and Lame Felix—Riches and a Good Name—Proverbs concerning Riches—Success—Midas—“Treacly Bob”—Farmer Bloomfield’s only Child—“Only Save her, Doctor”—Danger in making haste to be Rich—“It will not do!”—Proverbs—Climbing a Ladder—Holding on—Running a Race—The Chinese Student—Lord Brougham’s Mottoes—The Witty Frenchman—The Spider and his Breakfast—Rich and Poor—An Object in Life,	53
---	----

CHAPTER V.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING LOOKING UP.

A Beautiful Evening—The Stars—The Man with the Muck-rake—The Young Man who found a Sovereign	
--	--

CONTENTS

ix

	PAGE
—The Poet King and the Stars—The Slender Stem	
—Look above Yourself—The Great Stone Face—	
Ernest—The Man like the Stone Face—The	
Rich Man—The Warrior—the Senator—The Poet	
—What makes Great Men—The Indian and the	
Mountain—Peace in Great Heights, . . .	71

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIVAL SCHOOLS—A TALK ABOUT FIGHTING.

Saltmarsh's Academy and Bocking School—Fighting—	
The Quaker's Question—What Life is compared to	
—Two Forces—Duty and Inclination—Fiery Eyes	
and Sweet Eyes—Passion and Gentleness—Rocks	
and Waves—Proverbs about Passion—Passionate	
Sampson—Anger—Which is the most Powerful ?—	
Sin—Cheerfulness—Whom to Trust—Armour—	
Girdle—Breastplate—Soldier and his Bible—The	
Feet—Shield—Helmet—Sword—The King and his	
Son,	89

CHAPTER VII.

SUKEY PINPOLE—WHAT FÉLIX SAID ABOUT HEROES.

Widow Brown and her Son—A Foolish Action—Saving	
his Captain's life—Heroic Lives—Plutarch—Queen	
Elizabeth's Heroes—Death of Sir Humphrey Gil-	
bert—A Bold Sea Lion—Life or Death—Men who	
face Death—The Servant Girl of Antwerp—King	
David and his Mighty Men—A Book of Heroes—	
Quietly Enduring, and Patiently Waiting—The	
Sailor Boy—Am I a Coward now ?—The Mission	
of the Knight—Who Conquered Error—Proverbs	
about Talking and Doing,	107

CHAPTER VIII.

PAGE

OLD BOBTAIL.

Who Bobtail was—What Bobtail did—How Bobtail Died,	125
---	-----

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT FELIX SAID CONCERNING LITTLE THINGS.

Despise not the Day of Small Things—A Scratch with a Rusty Nail—Joe Clarke—A Small Leak—The Acorn, the Oak, and the Ship—Life Moulded by Trifles— The Old Woman's Invitation—Columbus—The Pin and the Banker—Three Crooked Pins—A Pathetic Story—When Trifles become Valuable—The King and the Spider—The Ant and the grain of Wheat— Little Cares and great Sorrows—Time—Proverbs— Sir John Herschel—Written in a Child's Album, .	141
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

WHAT FELIX SAID ABOUT BOOKS.

Kicking a Book—Books are Great Blessings—The Ship- wrecked Sailors—An old Copy of the Pilgrim's Progress—Books used as Props—"Desecrating Cole- ridge"—Chinese Proverbs concerning Printed Paper —Burning Paper—"Eyes of the Sages"—Books Scarce—The Blacksmith and the Novel—Ringing the Bells—Love for Books—The Boy who Com- mitted Suicide—The Path of Duty—The Glover's Apprentice—Cobbett's first Book—The "Tale of a Tub"—Cultivate a Love for Reading—Bad Books— Read Your Bibles,	155
--	-----

CONTENTS.

xi

PAGE

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT FELIX SAID CONCERNING DARKNESS.

Have you seen a Ghost?—The Ghost on the Wall—
Darkness—The Night Expedition—The Ambush—
Soldiers Defeated—Darkness makes Afraid—Dark-
ness a Friend—Factory Children—A Lame Factory
Child—Always Tired—A Sad Procession—Lovely
Things grow out of Darkness—Darkness a Cloak—
The Murdered Gold-digger—Ignorance—The Sailor
and the Letter—"Farewell, Old England!"—Moral
Darkness—The Old Mine Shaft—Outer Darkness, . 171

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING WORK.

A novel definition of Labour—The Churchyard—Work
the lot of all—Little Daffydowndilly and Mr Toil—
Poetry—Youth—Insects—Heights attained by Great
Men—The Young Prince—King Industry—King
Sloth—Shiftless Tommy—Love Work—Work all
can do, 185

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARIAN DOVE—A FEW WORDS ABOUT SORROW.

Sorrow—The Dove—The Library—The Maiden—
Sculptor—The Maiden and the Dove—The Un-
uttered Prayer—The End, 197

CHAPTER I.

A WORD OR TWO CONCERNING JAME FELIX

2.

“ As lame as St Giles’s Cripplegate.”

“ Bear, and blame not what you cannot change.”

“ When men speak ill of thee, live so as nobody may believe them.”

“ The best mode of instruction is to practise what we preach.”

“ Neither praise nor dispraise thyself: thine actions serve the turn.”

“ He knows best what is good that has endured evil.”



LAME FELIX.

CHAPTER I.

A WORD OR TWO CONCERNING LAME FELIX.

A WITHERED branch on a hale and vigorous-looking tree is an unsightly object, and unpleasant for the eyes to look upon; so also is a dead rose on a rose-tree when all its companions are blooming with life and beauty. But the proverb says, "*Better a dead branch than a dead tree,*" and "*Better one dead rose than twenty:*" and after all it may not arise from any radical fault in the tree that it has a withered branch, or in the rose-bush that it has a dead rose; it may have arisen from outward circumstances over which neither the one nor the other possessed any command, some outward and deadly influence which the inner impulses of their being had not sufficient power to ward off or counteract.

Thus, most likely, the fact of a tree having a withered branch, when all the rest are flourishing and green, may be the result of a day or night of tempest, when thunder pealed along the heavens, lightning rent clouds asunder, and the current of electric fire struck the branch, scorching up its life and the bare possibility of its ever receiving fresh ; the topmost branches of trees may frequently be seen denuded of leaves and withered from the effects of the deadly lightning which kills where it strikes. The fact of a rose-bush possessing a dead rose may arise from the labours of innumerable black little insects alighting upon it, destroying its loveliness, so that the gentle rain and silent dew have no more power to bring back its beauty ; as black little thoughts creep into the heart of a boy or girl, killing its freshness ; or, again, a slug or a worm may eat away the heart of the rose, and with it its life—as pride, and envy, and malice eat away many a human heart, leaving it dry and withered.

Now Felix Steadman, or “Lame Felix,” as he was invariably and more familiarly called, had the misfortune—and what can be a heavier burden for a man ?—to possess a withered limb, a dead leg, which, as he himself observed, answered neither the purpose of use nor ornament : for all practical intents and purposes he could have got on equally as well without it.

But Felix’s lameness arose from no fault or folly of his own—it was the result of a shot received in battle

while fighting for his country's honour and glory in far away India. The ball had struck him in the hip, the right one, contracting the sinews, and giving a crook to the spine ; so that for the remainder of his days he found himself compelled to accept as a companion, friend, and support—a crutch ; but he consoled himself by saying, "*Better a crutch for a lame limb, than one for a weak will,*" and made his leg answer the purpose of a text from which he preached many a sermon. And Felix always had something to say worth hearing, for he thought and spoke justly and right, although an American author has been foolish enough to say, it is impossible for a man to think right with a curve in his spine. Felix, however, was a living proof to the contrary.

A hale and cheerful-hearted old man was *Lame Felix*. Did any one pity him on account of his misfortune, say words of commiseration to him because of his dead limb, or taunt him with it, as I have known some unfeeling boys do—ay, and mēn too—he always had ready a few concise and consolatory proverbs which he would utter in reply, proverbs which he once said must have originated with lame men, and been repeated ever since by successive generations of lame men, as a kind of balm for their crooked limbs, or hurt and irritated feelings when made game of by some lubber-headed, hard-hearted man or boy : "*Better a dead limb than a dead body.*" "*Better withered legs than withered affections.*" "*Better a bad*

leg than a bad heart." "*Better a weak limb than a weak head."* "*Better a lame limb than a lame life."* "*With patience and a good heart a lame dog may reach home at last."*

Such were some of the proverbs to which Lame Felix gave utterance ; and so heartily would he say them that one felt half inclined to believe it was not so bad a thing after all, as one might suppose, to be lame. Another of his proverbs was, "*Better be good with one leg than bad with two ;*" and another, "*If Christ died for a thief, He surely died for a cripple."*

Felix was a well-known and highly-respected character in the little town of Braintree, on the outskirts of which stood the little cottage in which he lived. Every man, woman, and child who resided in "High Street," "Bank Street," "Pound-End," on the "London Road," or even in the adjoining parish of Bocking, knew Felix. The poor loved him, and the rich respected him, and not a boy in the town but looked up to Felix and regarded him as a wonderful fellow ; it was only badly-disposed people, and evil-minded boys, that either thought or said ill of him, for he was apt at times, if he thought the occasion warranted it, to speak his mind pretty freely to all such ne'er-do-wells, all of which they took as a personal affront instead of mending their ways ; this, however, did not surprise Felix, for he would say, "It is much easier to give advice than take it." But the love of the many made up for the defection of the few, and Felix

LITTLE SUSIE EVANS' DEATH. 7

cared little for the opinion of those who were disposed to regard him with an unfavourable eye.

The very children loved Felix ; the "six years' darlings of a pigmy size" would cling to his hands and legs, and sometimes almost capsize him by clinging to his crutch, while their pretty faces would break out into smiles and dimples as they welcomed him with shouts of delight. He always had a kind word and loving caress for each one, and they appeared instinctively to know that he loved them and was their friend.

Poor little Susie Evans, on the day she died, would insist upon having *Lame Felix* to sit by the side of her crib holding her hand in his ; looking up into his face with those large, pathetic eyes of hers, into which pain and the near approach of death seemed to have infused such mysterious light, she said in her simple, pretty, childish way :

"Me love you Felix ! me love you very much ; you good, and love little Susie. Kiss me," and Felix kissed the little mouth held up to him by the child, with the tears running down his rugged face ; seeing which she said, "No cry, dear Felix, me love you ; me say the pretty hymn you learn me." And almost with her last breath the child repeated a few simple lines which *Lame Felix* had taught her :

"If little hearts believe and love
The Saviour dear in heaven,
All happy thoughts and blessings sweet
By Him to them are given.

'Should little hearts be full of pain,
And little lives have trouble,
His loving face smiles all away,
And makes their pleasure double.

"The gentle Shepherd loves his lambs,
And guards, and guides, and feeds them,
And gently on, through pleasant paths,
To heaven at last He leads them."

As I intimated above, all the Braintree boys knew *Lame Felix*, and regarded him as one set apart from the common run of men; what with his wonderful store of proverbs, parables, and incidents of adventure, he was looked up to as a prodigy; how he had ever been able to accumulate such an abundance of wise sayings was perfectly marvellous and unaccountable. One wag of a fellow spread about the theory that *Felix* had been left an orphan, and, being brought up by hand, was dieted on proverbs and parables instead of milk and pap, and that if a lancet were thrust into his veins, or if he were tapped like a barrel of beer, instead of blood out would flow a proverb or a parable; be that as it may, certainly *Felix* had sufficient to stock a whole county; when questioned on the subject himself he would reply that he had only made use of the eyes and ears which God had given him. And it is surprising what may be learned by the eye and the ear, what a vast amount of knowledge may enter at each gateway if there be but the active brain behind.

Every boy and girl should strive to cultivate this

habit of observation, train the eye to see and the ear to hear ; this habit once acquired, it is surprising what pleasure it is the means of imparting, and on the contrary how much enjoyment is lost. It is the old story of the two boys who went out for a walk ; the one using his eyes could not take a single step without seeing something to interest him, while his companion sauntered along with his hands in his pockets, seeing neither beauty in the sky above him, nor on the earth beneath and around him. Cultivate a habit of observation. This is what *Lame Felix* had done, and now in his old age his mind was, as it were, a storehouse full of the gathered fruits of many years.

Felix in his young days had been a restless lad ; I do not mean by that, a bad boy ; no, he was not that by any means, for he was kind-hearted, generous, and brave, but unceasingly restless ; he could not endure stillness, inactivity, he must be going somewhere or doing something ; it was not in his nature to remain quiet ; he was always the last in school and the first out, and could never be made to go to bed until the very last thing ; while no bird was earlier awake than Felix. Many were the grave headshakings at his restless habits, and many were the grave prophecies shot at him like so many arrows from a bow ; for it is surprising how many people there are ready and willing to predict the ruin and destruction of a fellow-creature, instead of putting out a hand to save him. Felix was to be a rolling stone all his life and gather

no moss, according to the wiseacres of his native place.

His poor mother did not think hardly of him ; she knew his heart was in the right place ; she only thought that instead of blood quicksilver flowed through his veins, he was so unnaturally restless. Had his mother lived—she died when he was quite a lad—Felix might have turned out different to what he did ; for his restlessness—which is another name for force—might have turned into its proper channel ; as it was, when he left school he was apprenticed to a trade he abhorred ; and after a few months' trial ran away and went to sea ; sailed to various parts of the world ; roamed about Southern America, went gold-digging in Australia, and lumbering in Canada.

But the strangest, and to him most important, event in all his erratic career, was while on a visit to the Celestial Empire, where he heard an English missionary preaching the glad tidings of the Saviour's love, to a congregation of sailors and soldiers. The words of the preacher went home with power to the heart of Felix ; and from that day he dedicated his life and powers to Him who had died to blot out all sins. Yet still, Felix did not give up his wandering mode of life ; he went from place to place, as of old ; but now he did what he had never dreamt of doing before, he spoke a word in season for his Great Captain.

What with trading, and honest, hard work, Felix contrived to scrape together a considerable sum of

money, with which he determined to purchase himself a pension and rest from his travels ; it was while he was in India he came to this resolution, and when within a few days of embarking for his native land, he volunteered to serve in an expedition which was setting out to quell a rebellious province, and wanted recruits. It was in this expedition he received the wound which made him a cripple for the remainder of his days.

The proverb says, "*Youth may stray afar, yet return at last,*" so with Felix. He returned to his native place, Braintree, to spend what years yet remained of his life. He purchased himself a cottage on the London Road, surrounded by a piece of garden ground, which it was his especial delight to keep in prime order, and in which he laboured all the year round.

Felix soon became known as a character somewhat above the ordinary run of men. His talk was found to be something worth listening to, while his actions corresponded with what he preached. He did not say one thing and do another. He always strove to act up to what he considered right and just ; was ever ready to say a kind word to this neighbour, or do a kind deed for that. He was proved to be a man to be relied upon, whose honest, cheerful face was ever welcome at a fireside or by a sick-bed. Indeed, he proved a great comfort and strength in hours of trouble and affliction, and it became quite a regular

thing to post off after *Lame Felix* were any family in sorrow or distress.

And it was a very noticeable thing about *Felix* that, when he endeavoured to make people happy and comfortable, he usually did it according to their ideas of comfort and happiness, not from any pet fancies of his own. Much good that is done in the world meets with an ungrateful return, because most people strive to make others happy from their notions of what constitute happiness, totally ignoring the fact that those whom they are striving to benefit may cherish quite different ideas concerning it.

Every one knew *Lame Felix*, and were glad to see him. The minister always gave him a hearty shake of the hand when they met, and would have him occasionally address his Sunday-school scholars. *Miss Lart*, who kept a young ladies' boarding-school (where it was currently reported the young ladies were helped twice to pudding and once to meat), always beamed on *Felix* with a smile, and at the close of every term had him in to say a few parting words to her pupils, who on their part quite adored him, not alone for the fact of his being the only member of the male sex allowed to visit them, or to shake hands with them if he chanced to meet them while taking their constitutional walks, but because there was something in the old man quite loveable. They worked him no end of book-marks and other little nick-nacks by way of expressing their love. Round-headed, wiry, little Lawyer

Cane, whose eldest daughter went by the name of Miss Finicks, always had a civil word for Felix, and spoke it without entertaining the slightest idea of sending him in a bill for it. Martin the builder, a very severe man, who had been publicly baptized in Hoppit River, always gave Felix a cheerful nod. So did Warren the blacksmith and local preacher. Fat Mr Chinery the baker, and the little Welshman Davis, a retired tradesman, would sometimes even pay him a visit ; while Laver, a master carpenter and deacon, pointed Felix out as the best man in Braintree. Olmstead the surgeon used to exchange flowers with Felix ; while Dixon, a rival surgeon, always checked his horse in front of the cottage to wish him good-day.

But it was among the boys Felix was especially great. He always had something to say to them, and it was no unusual thing for a number of them—I was one of the number—to wend their way on half-day holidays, summer evenings, or winter nights, to the cottage of *Lame Felix*, where they were sure of receiving a welcome, and hearing and seeing something which always did them good and was profoundly interesting. I never knew a man who could talk to boys like Felix. He charmed them with the account of his many adventures, and with descriptions of foreign lands ; yet he never let them go away without saying a word for the Great Master he served and loved, and whom he wished us to love and serve likewise.

14 THE COTTAGE OF LAME FELIX.

His cottage was very prettily situated, beautiful green meadows and corn-fields stretching out in front as far as the eye could reach, with no houses or buildings, except a farm-house, known as Bobby Rofe's, to intercept the view; behind was a large nursery garden belonging to a Wesleyan local preacher named Clarke. Throughout the spring months, when nature dressed herself in her lovely mantle of green, the cuckoo might there be heard, the thrush, the linnet, the lark, and, in the hush of the night, the melody of the nightingale. Felix had made himself a seat outside his cottage door, where, in the quiet of the holy evening time, he would sit and enjoy his pipe, while neighbours, inclined for a chat, would lean over the gate or garden fence. Sometimes the minister would saunter down in his study coat, with his immense meerschaum between his lips, and swaying himself backwards and forwards with the motion of the gate, which he would unlatch, would commence conversation by saying, "Lor, Felix, what a man you are to smoke!"

"Ay, ay; so *we* are, sir," would be Felix's reply.

The minister was a character. He rolled in his walk like a sailor accustomed to stormy seas. His face was not a very handsome one, but his nose was prodigious in size—some would insist that as a coming event it cast its shadow before; and one irreverent fellow, a tailor, whose mother adored her pastor, and was always eager and pleased to catch a

glimpse of his face as he passed by, would make game of it; while sitting at work in his bow window he would suddenly cry out, "Mother, here comes Johnnie Garter!"

"Why, where, boy?" the mother would reply, after looking vainly down the street.

"Well, I know I saw the shadow of his nose!"

By calling the minister Johnnie Garter no disrespect was intended; it was simply an affectionate term used by all who knew him. He was full of fun and laughter, passionately fond of smoking; indeed, when he preached a sermon somewhat better than the ordinary run of his discourses it was generally observed that "*Johnnie smoked an extra pipe over that.*" Yet he was a man who had passed through many and severe trials, and fortune had dealt him a few very hard blows; nevertheless, he bore it all heroically, having his shelter in the Rock of Ages.

Such were Lame Felix and a few of his surroundings.





CHAPTER II.

TOM POTTER: OR, THE DOWN-HILL PATH.

“ He who sows brambles must not go barefoot.”

“ He who doth what he should not, shall feel what he would not.”

“ The thief is sorry to be hanged, but not that he is a thief.”

“ Better speak truth roughly, than lie covertly.”

“ The credit that is got by a lie, only lasts iill the truth comes out.”

“ Tell me with whom thou goest, and I'll tell thee what thou doest.”



CHAPTER II.

TOM POTTER ; OR, THE DOWN-HILL PATH.

THEY are well-known proverbs which say, and with great truth, "*Every pack has a cur, and every army a coward;*" "*No village is without a public-house and a bane.*"

Braintree could boast of two or three banes, as many another small town can ; but the one which called forth the above two proverbs from Lame Felix was Tom Potter, a red-headed, freckled-featured, saucy-looking youth, of about eighteen years of age, who was the black sheep of his family, having caused his parents to shed more tears, and endure more heart-pangs, than all the rest of their children put together—a thoroughly bad boy. The proverb says, "*It is a bad soil where no flowers will grow,*" and yet there certainly seemed no chance of any growing up in the nature of Tom Potter. A wild lad he was ; he had played more tricks, robbed more orchards, and ne-

glected more good advice than all the other boys in the town ; yet he did not think himself bad ; I once heard him tell *Lame Felix* he considered himself "a good-enough kind of fellow."

"Ay, ay," replied *Felix*, "the best in the town when all the rest have gone out."

He was an ill-natured boy, was *Tom Potter* ; a harmless and pleasant trick can be appreciated and smiled at, but a spiteful one is mean and cowardly. *Tom* would upset an infirm old woman, and think it fun, frighten a little child into fits and enjoy doing it, or rob his parents, who had a hard struggle to make both ends meet. I recollect his once taking a piece of ice to the Sunday-school, and, in the middle of the minister's prayer, drop it down the back of one of the lady teachers, causing her to give an involuntary scream as she felt it sliding down her vertebral column.

On another occasion he carried a black beetle up into the children's gallery, and during the sermon, stretched his hand across the partition which divided the boys from the girls and safely deposited it in the ear of one of *Miss Lart's* governesses, much to her consternation and horror ; but the act had been detected by a male teacher, a *Mr Smoothy*, who always carried a large gingham umbrella with which he belaboured the heads of refractory boys, and down it came on the pate of mischievous *Tom*, at which he cried out in a loud voice, "You leave me alone, can't you ? I didn't touch you !"

The minister was obliged to stop, and recognising the voice—for it was not the first time it had been heard in the building—said, "That's right, Mr Smoothy, give him another."

Tom stole the minister's grapes, but being caught in the act, professed great contrition, and earnestly promised amendment if he was let go, and not punished. The minister, as kind-hearted a man as ever lived, willing the lad should have another chance to reform and mend his evil ways, after giving him a serious talking, let him off from all the consequences of his sin. But the act of mercy was wasted, except that it gave consolation to the minister's soul in the fact that he had given him another opportunity for reformation—for Tom soon plunged himself into far more serious crimes. Himself, and several others equally as bad, broke into the house of a widow lady; but when decamping with their booty, were surprised by the apparition of long-legged policeman Saville, who soon overtook and captured Tom, safely lodging him in the lock-up at the end of "Hilly Camp."

On the day after the robbery his poor mother was discovered weeping outside the lock-up door; but Tom's heart was too hardened to be moved by his mother's tears, so she went and entreated Felix to go and visit him, and try if he could bring him to a sense of his wretched condition. Felix procured an order and went, but he might just as well have preached to a stone for all the impression his words produced.

A number of boys paid a visit to Felix's cottage in the evening and asked him all about it.

"It is a sad case, I'm afraid, boys," he began, shaking his head, "a very bad case ; I never saw a more hardened lad in my life ; and to give him advice is like rubbing salt on a sore place, producing only irritation and annoyance ; he cannot, or will not, see the sinfulness of what he has done, and lays the blame on the policeman because he is in prison. Well says the wise man, '*The fox condemns the trap, not himself;*' and a far wiser man has said, '*The fool doeth right in his own eyes;*' and what is a bad man or a bad lad but a foolish person, choosing to do evil instead of good, or to do wrong instead of right, and then pluming himself on the wisdom of his actions, and trying to cheat himself into the belief that he will escape the inevitable consequences of his folly ? for, sooner or later, be sure of that, boys, evil meets its reward. The Chinese say, '*Great goodness and great wickedness, sooner or later, are sure to be rewarded.*' And again, '*If one does not good, heaven will send upon him a hundred evils.*'

"It is very easy to do evil, to commit a sin ; but once done, there is no escaping from the punishment. A well-known proverb says, '*A hundred years cannot repair a moment's loss of honour.*' And what number of years is required to repair a sin ! How easy it is to go down hill, but when you have once commenced the descent how difficult it is to stop ! and when you

have gone a little further down the incline, how *impossible* it is to stop !

“I once read of an Indian who was amusing himself in his canoe, on the waters above the mighty falls of Niagara. Presently his boat was caught in the current of the stream, and he thought how pleasantly and swiftly it glided along ; but friends on the banks of the river saw how great was his danger, and shouted to warn him of it. Heedless of their cries, he suffered his canoe to go on, and on, and on, until he was thoroughly aroused to a sense of his imminent danger by hearing the thunder of the falls. Seizing his paddles, he endeavoured to row to the banks where stood his anxious friends ; but now, to his horror, he found the strength of the current, which he might have easily overcome higher up, too much for him. Frantic and desperate were the efforts he made, but all of no avail, the force of the current swept the frail boat nearer and nearer to its fearful end, finally carrying it over the dreaded falls.

“So it is when a lad once commences to go the down-hill path, regardless of the warnings of parents and friends, heedless that it is the path which leadeth to destruction, until they get so far on the way that no efforts of their own can save them. There is a proverb, not a very elegant or refined one, but strong and pointed, which says of a man or lad, ‘ *He’ll go to ruin without his boots being greased,*’ which means, he is going the down-hill path so rapidly that he needs no aid to help him over the ground.

“Oh that broad, smooth, pleasant, and flower-decked road ! how many there are who are making their life’s journey in it, intoxicated and delirious with its false enchantments and pleasures ! how many there are who are beguiled into its seeming enjoyments ! Truly says the Persian proverb, ‘*Misery is written on the portals of Paradise ; joy is written on the gates of hell.*’ But beyond the portals is the reality. ‘*It is a great journey to life’s end ;*’ yet life is only the hall or vestibule through which we pass into the inner mysteries of the palace, where all true beauties and joys are treasured.

“Beware, boys, of the down-hill road, for the end thereof is death. To do this effectually, you must take heed to the commencement of evil : it is easier to receive than to cast out. The proverb says, ‘*Evil comes to us by ells, and goes away by inches.*’ Take heed to your thoughts ; your mind is given to you for other purposes and ends than to serve as a receptacle for bad thoughts ; and what if you go all your journey through, and collect nothing but bad thoughts ?

“Fancy the captain of a vessel sailing to China, and bringing back a cargo of bad silks or spurious teas—how he would be laughed at for so doing, and what a loss the cargo would be ! Yet I once knew a captain who did this ; he invested all his capital in a shipload of silks, but he took all the bales on board without examining the texture and quality of the silk they were supposed to contain ; and when he returned,

and the bales were opened, they were found to contain nothing but rubbish, with the exception of a single piece placed at the top to hide the deception. It proved a fatal transaction to the poor captain, for in a moment of despair he shot himself. But how much more foolish and serious to carry home to the eternal port a soul laden with bad thoughts and bad ideas?

“There is a law in natural philosophy which runs, that no two objects can occupy one and the same place at one given time. They have to come in contact, and the one dislodges the other. The same law holds good in moral as well as in natural things. No two thoughts can occupy the same place. Fill your mind with good thoughts and good desires and you will have no room for bad ones. ‘*One nail driveth out another nail,*’ and ‘*one thought driveth out another thought.*’ If you have a bad thought drive it out by a good one, and never, on the contrary, drive out a good one by a bad one. There is danger of a good and pure thought getting soiled and stained, if obliged to dwell in the neighbourhood of a bad and impure one.

“I remember, many years since, once rowing on a river in Southern America with a shipmate and several natives. It was a delightful morning, and the route one of novelty and freshness; mighty forests on either side of the river stretching away inland, no one knew how many miles; tall and beautiful palm-trees growing right out of the water, every leaf reflected as in a

mirror ; splendidly-coloured butterflies were fluttering among the leaves ; fish leaping from the water, while high over head were innumerable birds flying about in the sultry air. All at once, from among the branches of a mighty tree, a large python darted into the boat, causing us, in our terror, to plunge into the river and swim to shore for safety. So at the entrance of a bad thought good ones will take to flight.

“If you make your soul a storehouse for bad thoughts, you will in time learn to speak deceitfully and false, say that which is not true, tell lies. This is mean and cowardly, and all springing from bad thoughts. And there are boys even who never tell a plain untruth, but go about in a circumlocutory way, tell a round-about lie, deceiving, or trying to deceive themselves with the idea that it is not so bad as a direct one, forgetting the proverb which says, ‘*That a lie is a lie all the world over,*’ and also that other one, ‘*That a lie which is half the truth is always the worst of lies.*’

“Sometimes people who get their liver and stomachs out of order swallow pills to set them in good working condition again,—always, I should fancy, a disagreeable thing to do ; but to obviate the unpleasantness of the thing many folks take their pills coated over with silver, but they are pills nevertheless. So with lies. Many people wrap them up in sugared and honeyed words before they administer them to those they wish to deceive—as, when children, we swallow

powders in spoonfuls of jam—but they are lies still. Somewhere abroad—I forget now where—I once heard a proverb to the effect that ‘*Liars, like fleas, are found in every country.*’ However true this may be, it is no reason why it should be so. Never tell lies, boys, never tell lies ; and to keep from doing this you must keep guard over the doorways of your heart, that no bad thoughts may enter.

“Bad thoughts lead to bad speech, and bad speech to bad actions, and bad actions are acted lies, and not only bring disgrace but punishment. We covet our neighbour’s goods, and put our hands forth to steal that which is not our own, and in a moment bring down ruin upon ourselves, and sorrow and disgrace upon our homes and our friends. Recollect the proverb I just quoted, ‘*A hundred years cannot repair a moment’s loss of honour.*’ But it all comes from harbouring bad thoughts.

“I imagine it must be more pleasant to have a coffer full of real diamonds and gold jewels than to have it filled with paste diamonds and Brummagem gold. I know which is the most precious, and which must give the greatest satisfaction to their owner. So, is it not better to have a heart filled with beautiful, bright thoughts, which will bear the light of day, rather than one filled with thoughts which are bad, and which love darkness rather than light?

“What folly it would be for a ship to leave harbour on a long voyage provisioned with bad food, which,

if eaten, would produce disease and death ! How much greater the folly to enter on your life's journey with a mind garnered and stored with bad food, the feeding on which produces misery, despair, and death to the soul !

“*Like loves the like,*’ says the proverb, and all those who cherish things that are bad and impure will seek companions whose tastes lie in a similar direction. ‘*A man is known by the company he keeps.*’ So is a boy ; and if any boy wishes to go down the broad, down-hill road rapidly, there is nothing like evil companions to help him over the ground ; for they impart to him a fictitious courage and fictitious strength, helping him to do things he would never have the boldness to do alone and unaided. But they sap up what little of real moral courage he may have, what remnants of goodness may linger in his soul, and what desires after better things he may have in his heart.

“I have seen trees in South American forests, round the trunks and branches of which creepers and bush ropes have twisted and winded themselves, tightening their embraces until they have killed the trees, having squeezed the very life out of them. So with bad companions. When they have once encircled you with their blandishments and power, it is next to impossible to shake them off. Beware of evil companions. ‘*Better alone than in bad company,*’ says one proverb, while another has it, that ‘*The love of the*

wicked is more dangerous than his hatred. For you can depise his hatred, and take precautions against it ; but his love is secret enmity, clothed in a garment of light, against which it is difficult to be on your guard. Shun evil companions.

“All marshy places, bogs, jungles, are places full of decaying and dead vegetable matter, the atmosphere arising from which is loaded with disease, which, if imbibed for a time, will render the body unwholesome, tainting the blood. I have known men on the coast of Africa who have been so incautious as to sleep in the open air after nightfall, when the impure miasma has enveloped them ; and in the morning they have awoke with the deadly coast-fever holding them in its grip ; and ere another sun had descended, they were gone to their long homes.

“There was one man I knew very well, for I had sailed several voyages with him, not a bad kind of man, take him all in all, but heedless and incautious to the last degree. Well, we had been out with our guns all day hunting for game ; and by nightfall, when we again returned to the landing-place, were considerably tired with our day's sport, and not one felt much inclined to row out to the ship, especially when the moon and stars were shining so calm and bright. It looked much pleasanter to spend the night beneath the shadow of some huge limbed tree than beneath the stifling hatches : but each man

knew how great would be the peril to yield to the temptation. So we set about launching the boat, when Jem Wilson—that was my comrade's name—said, 'Come what would, he was too tired to go off to the ship that night. He would sleep on shore.' No persuasions could induce him to alter his determination, so we threw him a boat cloak and left him. When the morning sun had banished the deadly mists, there was Jem Wilson dancing about in a strange manner on the shore. Said one, 'He must be mad, or has the fever pretty strong.' And sure enough he had, and in a few hours' time I helped to dig his grave beneath a tall palm-tree, where we laid him to sleep until the last trumpet shall awake him. I often think of poor Jem and the deadly fever of the coast.

"And bad people are just like so many marshy and jungly places—they emit a moral miasma which it is poison and death to breathe. Again I say, beware of evil companions. What is it that Solomon says about wicked companions (and he certainly knew what evil influence is if anybody ever did)?—*'My son, if sinners entice thee consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole as those that go down into the pit: we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse: my son, walk not thou in*

the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path; for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.'

If you wish to steer clear of the down-hill road you must shun all evil companions, boys; remember that."

It was many a long day before Tom Potter was again seen about Braintree. His night's exploit cost him dear, for he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment; and like the impudent fellow he was, when the judge passed the sentence, he thanked his lordship for his trouble, and would reward him on the first possible occasion, by sending him home a monkey as a present.



CHAPTER III.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING
CHARACTER.—THE THREE BOATS.

“ Many persons carry about their characters in their hands: not a few under their feet.”

“ To be weak is misery, doing or suffering.”

“ He who is the cause of his own misfortune may bewail it himself.”

“ The house shows the owner.”

“ Where the drink goes in, there the wit goes out.”

“ Life is a troubled sea.”



CHAPTER III.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING CHARACTER.—
THE THREE BOATS.

“**C**HARACTER is a fine thing, boys,” said
Lame Felix ; “character is a grand thing.
With all your getting get character. Some
one has called it the backbone of our moral nature,
answering the same purpose as the backbone to the
body, knitting together and energising all the powers,
attributes, and forces of our being. A man without a
character is like a leaf falling from a tree, the sport of
every wind, blown hither and thither without the
power of resistance, one thing alone certain, in the
human leaf, as in the leaf of the tree, that it is falling,
but when or where it will come to the ground no one
exactly knows. ‘*Unstable as water, thou shalt not
excel,*’ was the verdict passed upon a characterless
man ages and ages ago, but like everything which that
grand guide-book says, how true it is! Unstable,

THE SHATTERED PORTRAIT. 37

you are in trouble and difficulty a weak man will not do to rest upon ; as he himself, although in no trouble, needs a staff, for the proverb says truly, '*A tottering man must lean upon a staff*,' and therefore has no strength to impart to another. There is no reliance to be placed on a characterless man ; he is like a weathercock, turning whichever way the wind blows. You are never certain of him ; he says one thing to-day and another to-morrow, while he utters quite a different thing on the third. These flabby kind of people never receive an impression with any force. They are always miserable—weakness means misery—although they have comfortable surroundings.

"I called on a man the other day, a well-to-do man, with a nicely furnished home, and a pretty, active little wife ; indeed, everything that a man could wish for he in a measure possesses. I found him with a portrait of himself in his hand, through which he had just thrust his fist.

"'Hallo ! Mr Jones,' I cried, 'why on earth have you spoilt that excellent likeness of yourself in that savage fashion?'

"'Steadman,' he replied, 'when I had that taken was a happy man ; and the thought was too much for me just now, so I've destroyed it.'

"'Well, what is it makes you miserable?'

"'I can't exactly say ; but still I am miserable.' 'And to my thinking, boys, he never will know ' he is miserable and unhappy. 'To a shattered

constant only in inconstancy, might be the epitaph written over many a life.

“How many are the images used to illustrate the vital importance of character! It is to the life what heat is to the body—a life-giving force; it is as an anchor which enables the ship to ride out the storm; it is as the mainspring of a watch, upon the strength and durability of which the perfection of the whole depends; it is as the key-stone by which the arch is supported. Numberless, I say, are the images used to illustrate the importance of character. A man without a character is like a house without a foundation, or, as our Great Teacher says, he is *‘like unto one who built his house upon the sands,’* which the wind, and the waves soon knocked to pieces.

“Want of character means weakness, and weakness amounts almost to sin—I sometimes think quite—for it seems to do almost as much mischief. An atom blown about by the wind gets into a person’s eye, causing no end of annoyance. So circumstances drift a weak man up against you, producing some such an effect as the atom in the eye; with the one you cannot see until it is out, nor for some time after, and with the other you have no freedom for action.

“A weak, unstable, undecided man is a clog upon your energies, a weight upon your feet, a handcuff upon your hand. There is no dependence to be placed on a weak, characterless creature. The proverb says, *‘A rickety chair will not serve as a seat;’* and when

you are in trouble and difficulty a weak man will not do to rest upon ; as he himself, although in no trouble, needs a staff, for the proverb says truly, '*A tottering man must lean upon a staff*,' and therefore has no strength to impart to another. There is no reliance to be placed on a characterless man ; he is like a weathercock, turning whichever way the wind blows. You are never certain of him ; he says one thing to-day and another to-morrow, while he utters quite a different thing on the third. These flabby kind of people never receive an impression with any force. They are always miserable—weakness means misery—although they have comfortable surroundings.

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"And to my thinking, boys, he never will know why he is miserable and unhappy. '*To a shattered ship*

every wind is foul,' and every circumstance to a weak man is an occasion on which to be miserable.

"Get character, boys. Characterless people are the ruination of homes, and a characterless home is something dreadful to think of; its influence does not end with itself; the members of the family grow up and go out into the world, and make other characterless homes. There is a maxim which I have somewhere heard which runs, '*A bare pasture enriches not the soil, nor fattens the animals, nor increases the wealth of the owner.*' And so with a characterless home; there is neither health, wealth, nor happiness in it.

"You all remember the Waldon family, who occupied one of Barber Coote's cottages, just up the road here—what a home theirs was! No strength of character in either husband or wife. He received good wages, yet they got into debt everywhere, and finally went to rack and ruin. The woman had no idea of prudence or economy; still, if you had seen her at meal times you would have taken her to have been the very embodiment of *thrift* instead of *thriftlessness*, for it was, 'Here, Frederick, here is your allowance; here, Augustus, here is your allowance; here, Lenora, here is your allowance,' and so on through the whole six or seven children; yet economy was a virtue unpractised. Then, too, she would gossip all her time away, so that very often her husband would come home to his dinner and find none ready for him. He, poor man, was as weak as his wife, and between them they

brought their children up to be purposeless and objectless creatures. Their eldest son did nothing but haunt the stable-yard of the 'Wheat-sheaf,' or the 'Boar's Head,' and at last, when one of his little brothers died, stole the two half-crowns which were laid upon the eyes to keep the lids shut, and went and enlisted for a soldier; their second son ran away to sea, and died in the hospital at Gibraltar; and what a boy their third son was! You, some of you, remember how one Sunday he ran into church during the service, and shouted out, 'Bill, the dumplings are ready;' and how he used to annoy people by begging for money. The place became too hot to hold the family at last, and they left and went to London.

"All for the want of character homes are made unhappy. During my apprentice days I knew a man named George Matthew, who had the misfortune to possess a rather weak woman for a wife; he was no great shakes himself, and had not character of sufficient depth and strength to make the best of a bad bargain, but made matters worse than they would otherwise have been, by an irritating way he had of making fun of his wife's little weaknesses.

"She was much addicted to tears, and could cry very plentifully if any trifling thing thwarted her. George used to tell his friends that it would not be a bad spec if a company purchased his wife and buried her in some desert waste, as she would prove an unfailing spring of pure water.

"I remember calling one evening to see him about something, and found him by the fireside with a large gingham umbrella open, beneath which he was smoking his pipe.

" 'Don't be amazed,' he said, seeing my look of surprise, 'it's only a little storm, and will soon blow over; it's disagreeable at my age to get wet, one is liable to have the rheumatism, so I thought I'd shelter myself from the rain; I keep this umbrella on purpose;' and all the rain which was falling were his wife's tears.

This way of George's rather increased the storm of which he spoke.

"Character gives a lad the courage to say 'No' at the right time and in the right place. For want of courage to utter that little word of two letters, how many hopes have been nipped in the bud, how many hearts broken, and how many lives wasted and hopelessly wrecked! Ah! what a deal depends upon saying that little word resolutely, and then bravely acting up to it when once said. Learn, boys, to say *No*, or you will go tottering and falling all your lives.

"Better one good fall than a constant succession of little falls, or, as the proverb has it, '*Better stumble once than be always tottering*;' you may fail once to say *no*, but if it teaches you wisdom the failure is a success, and a great one if it imparts strength to act right the next time. '*It is a great point of wisdom to*

find out one's own folly,' says a proverb, while another reads, *'It is a manly act to forsake error.'* Everybody has it in him to be better than he is ; no one is so good as he might be.

"When I was over in America some years ago, I went to hear a very popular lecturer ; and during the course of his lecture he illustrated something he was saying by narrating an anecdote of a young man, who, on removing from the country to the city, was introduced to a circle of young men who were accustomed to meet once or twice a-week, for the ostensible purpose of mental improvement, by conversation and discussion, but whose real object was supper, wine, and cigars. For a time this young man enjoyed the evenings he spent in this association, but conscience—that still, small voice in every breast—at last spoke, and whispered what a waste of time and money to spend his evenings thus. So he determined to go no more, and when again solicited had the courage to say firmly 'No.'

"Reckoning up what money each evening's dissipation cost, he put aside an equal sum with the intention of devoting it to some charitable purpose. He soon had a considerable amount, which he bestowed upon a worthy widow, who was struggling to maintain, and give an education to, her fatherless children. The money came at a most opportune crisis, and was the means of helping her to accomplish her desired purpose. And the children of that poor

widow are now well-known and respectable citizens. Such things will character enable a man to do.

"It is your weak-headed, weak-willed, characterless boys and men who so frequently succumb to the terrible fascination of the glass, who have not strength to refuse the intoxicating draught, and by little and little become confirmed drunkards, and truly drunkenness is a terrible vice. Well says the proverb, '*Drunkenness is an egg from which all vices are hatched*;' and again, '*Drunkenness turns a man out of himself and leaves a beast in his room*,' and at last it leaves something worse than a beast.

"Once, when I was in one of the London hospitals, confined to my bed by an accident, and scarce able to move a limb through pain, and every other man in the ward in an almost similar condition, in the 'gloaming,' just before the gas was lit, when everything was hushed and quiet, the stillness only broken by an occasional groan from some poor sufferer, we were suddenly startled and alarmed by loud cries of '*Fire! fire! murder! murder! help! help!*' followed by piercing shrieks as of a man in mortal pain and terror.

"Not one in the ward could leave his bed to ascertain the cause of the uproar, and we consequently remained in considerable alarm, imagining all sorts of dreadful things, as we heard footsteps hurrying to and fro, and loud voices speaking. Presently the sounds retreated and gradually died away, when a nurse came

in, telling us not to be alarmed, as it was only a man suffering from delirium tremens, who in his madness had run down from the top-floor, endeavouring to escape; but, mistaking his way, had entered the '*theatre*,' where the porters captured him; and it was while being conveyed back to his ward he gave utterance to those alarming cries.

"I heard afterwards, from one who was with him at his death, that he was quite a young man, but had become so habituated to drink that he had ruined his prospects, ruined his health, crowning his career by an early death. From one of the windows of the ward in which he lay, he could see the cowl of a chimney which the wind continually moved. This proved to be no small source of terror, for he believed it was some evil spirit coming to carry him away. His bed was shifted, so that his back was towards the dreaded object, but that did not quiet his fears, for he fancied the evil spirit was creeping up behind.

"Beware of drink, boys, it is a terribly malignant power, and when once it gets you in its grip will not willingly let you go. Character will guard you from this by giving you strength of will to resist the temptation of the glass. It is a sad thing to see lads, almost boys, fresh from home and a mother's care, and perhaps pursued by a mother's prayers, hanging round the doors of taverns and public-houses, drinking with dissolute companions, and planting the seeds of beggary and disease.

"Get character, boys, that will give power to command your passions. Passions are mettlesome steeds, and if not well held in by bit and curb, are apt to run away with their owners ; but, well kept in hand, they are obedient to the slightest command, tractable, and made to run pleasantly along. But let the passions get beyond your control, and their career is something fearful to contemplate.

"I have been in the West Indies when a hurricane has swept over the islands, tearing up trees, hurling down houses, and dashing vessels on the rocks in its mad career ; and so, when uncontrolled passions sweep over the soul their effect is not less disastrous. The Chinese say, when they see a lad whose passions are not held in check, that '*He is a calf without a ring in his nose,*' a very tolerable description for an unbridled boy, who will go contrary to the way he ought to go, or the way you wish him to go. We say here, in Braintree, of such a 'boy, '*He's as contrary as Dick's hatband, that went nine times round, and then wouldn't tie,*' or '*He's like a pig with no string tied to its leg.*'

"Unbridled passions are wasted force—force which ought to be used for good and great purposes, and would be if turned into the right channel ; but, allowed to run riot, it brings the mind to some such condition as a garden permitted to run to waste, producing a plentiful crop of weeds, nettles, hemlock, and such like.

"Character is force, and, like light, will find its

way. Those queer people, the Chinese, who do so many foolish things, and utter so many wise ones, have a saying which runs thus: ‘*Where there is musk there will of course be perfume; it will not be necessary to stand in the wind.*’ Meaning to say, that if a man possesses virtue or character, it is not necessary for him to sound a trumpet to apprise everybody of the fact, or to hire the town crier to go round with his bell, and communicate to all people that Mr So-and-so has arrived in the town, and is an invaluable man, being stocked with a superabundance of character. If a man or lad has character it will make itself felt, in good time find its way, so that all whom it concerns will know it. How well you may see this if you go into a workshop, and observe the men at their work. You can speedily tell whether there is a man of character at the head of affairs, for there is great truth in the old proverb, ‘*Like master like man.*’

“I was reading the other day the life of that excellent and noble-hearted sailor, Lord Collingwood, and could not but be struck with the fact that the character of the man made itself felt throughout the whole fleet, even when only a captain. It was a common expression with the admiral beneath whom he served, if he had mutinous and disorderly men—‘Send them to Collingwood. He will bring them to order.’ And on one occasion, when giving an acting order to a lieutenant for Collingwood’s ship, he said, ‘I have given you a commission, sir, in the *Excellent*;

but remember that you are going to a man who will take it away from you to-morrow if you behave ill.' This firmness and force of character, combined with consideration and thoughtfulness for the comfort and welfare of his men, made him beloved by all, so that when he removed from one ship to another it was no unusual sight to see many of the men he was leaving behind, in tears.

"It is a grand thing to have character. It is the strength and life of the moral being; it imparts courage and the power of endurance; it enables a man or boy to use his disappointments, sufferings, sorrows, and troubles, for some noble end. They sweep over him, but leave him better as they pass away; for the proverb says truly: '*The wicked grow worse and good men better for trouble.*' It makes them firmer and yet more tender, more sympathising with others in their sorrows and misfortunes. Some butchers beat a beefsteak to make it tender, and many a time have I beaten bear-steaks for the same purpose; and a few blows on the heart of a man, if it is made of the right sort of metal, makes it wonderfully tender.

"If you want to see what character is, study your Bibles; there you will find some splendid specimens. A barrister, accustomed to train students for the bar, always set them to study and analyse the most difficult portions of the Bible; and when asked the reason why, said, 'Because there is nothing else like it for the development of mind and character.' Read

your Bible, boys. In it you will find the materials for making a grand character. Seek the help of the great Master Builder while constructing it. Let your prayer be, '*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;*' for out of the heart flows the issues of life. A text says, speaking of man, '*As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.*' As the heart is, so is the character.

"Life is a sea, sometimes calm and made glorious by the sun, at other times vexed and tempest tossed. All have to sail over this sea, and character is the boat or ship in which we sail."

THE THREE BOATS.

"In a little fishing village on the sea coast once dwelt three boys, Harry, Tom, and George; they had lived there from infancy, and were well known by all the villagers. On a certain day these three boys were to leave their native village, their friends and companions, and sail over the sea in search of an island which lay out of sight of land, but still not very far from it, and whoever gained the island would meet with a rich reward. But there was one task that each of the three boys had to accomplish before they could set sail; they were to construct their own boats.

"In the early spring months they began to build. Harry set to work about his with alacrity. He had resolved to produce a light, graceful, and elegant

boat ; no old tub was to satisfy him ; his must skim over the waves like a ' thing of life.' So he chose the lightest wood he could procure ; and, as the voyage was to be a short one, after he had laid the keel and built it up to a trifle above water-mark, he made the rest of thick cardboard, which he painted a bright and brilliant colour, giving it an air of gaiety, at the same time hiding the slightness of its structure ; a slender mast, with a fantastically cut sail, completed the boat, and very proud Harry was as he gave it the last finishing touch. But old sailors, who had passed their life battling with ocean storms and waves, shook their heads gravely as they examined and criticised its make, saying it was but a frail cockle-boat of a thing in which to be out in a storm. Harry, however, was satisfied with his performance, and only laughed at the warnings of the ' wise heads,' as he called them.

"Tom went to work at his boat in a not very earnest fashion, and in the process of construction exhibited quite a reprehensible thoughtlessness. True, he used tougher and more solid material than Harry, but was so careless about it that he did not join the planks closely together, or fill up the seams so as to render the boat water-tight ; he also put a worm-eaten plank at the bottom ; and when some kind neighbour pointed it out to him he only said—' Yes, I see ; but that will do as well as any other piece—at all events it's in now, and there it shall remain.'

"Another foolish thing he did was to make the

boat a little top-heavy by too much canvas, and was too careless about it to think of the probable consequences of such folly ; he was not going to take the trouble of diminishing the quantity ; it only needed a little care in the trimming of the boat, and all would be well. So when all was finished, he sat on the side whistling, and thinking of a hundred things rather than his voyage.

“George was a steady-going, sober kind of a lad, thoughtful and earnest in everything he undertook, so he set about his task in a resolute, earnest fashion, and commenced with the determination of constructing a solid, serviceable kind of boat, ‘for,’ thought he, ‘one knows not what may happen, and therefore it is best to be prepared for any emergency.’

“He carefully selected every plank he used, well testing its soundness and stoutness, to see if it could be relied upon. He was longer about his work than either Harry or Tom, and got heartily laughed at by them for the clumsy appearance of his boat ; but the old men nodded approvingly, saying it would stand wind and wave, and be likely to reach harbour.

“On a beautiful, bright, sunny morning they all three launched their boats and set sail, all the village turning out to wish them God-speed, and see them start. Away they went with a shout. Harry’s light craft soon shot ahead, and bade promise to make a speedy voyage. Tom’s followed in the wake of Harry,

while George lagged behind, his boat proving a slow sailer.

“How pleasant it all seemed to the lads, the sunshine laughing on the water, and the fresh breeze fanning their cheeks. Presently a little cloud was seen on the horizon, at first not bigger than a man’s hand, but gradually spreading over the whole heavens. The wind began to rise, the sea became agitated, the lightning flashed, and the thunder pealed. Harry became alarmed ; his boat was only made for *fair* weather, and was never intended to stand a storm. The waves rose higher and higher ; at last one smashed in the upper part of the boat, and the water poured in, while the wind caught the sail, snapping the slender mast asunder. Harry’s danger was great, he looked round to Tom for help, but Tom was too much occupied and concerned with his own boat to be able to render him any assistance, while George was too far off.

“Tom heard Harry’s despairing cry, cast one glance in the direction whence it came, but could see no boat. The waves had broken it in pieces. *Pleasure-boats* cannot stand rough weather.

“Tom became uneasy, his worm-eaten plank started, and the water oozed up through the ill-joined planks, and badly-filled seams, while at the same time his heavy mass of sail threatened to upset the boat. He dared not leave the tiller. He could only hope for calmer weather while steering as best he could. How-

ever, when he came in sight of the island and began to think his dangers were nearly past, a fierce blast of wind completely upset the boat, throwing Tom into the water. He swam about for some time, hoping George would come up, but finally became exhausted and sank.

“George, when he saw the cloud spreading over the sky, took in some of the sail, and prepared for dirty weather, so that when the storm burst over him his boat, though much tossed about, rode safely over the troubled sea. He saw the fate of his two comrades, but was unable to render any assistance, although he steered in their direction. Finally, with great skill, patience, and after passing through much danger, George reached the harbour of the island, where he was received with the shouts of those assembled to welcome him on shore.”





CHAPTER IV.

THE REEK FAMILY: OR, GETTING ON

"A bird may be ever so small, it always seeks a nest of its own."

"Every one has his lot and a wide world before him."

"Gold is no balm to a wounded spirit."

"He that is too much in haste may stumble on a good road."

"He wants to fly before he has wings."

"He that stays in the valley will never get over the hill."

"He who stops at every stone never gets to his journey's end."



CHAPTER IV.

THE REEK FAMILY ; OR, GETTING ON.

A LITTLE distance beyond the cottage of Lame Felix, and opposite the windmill, lived the Reek family, a family well-known in the little town of Braintree, as being a family determined to get on. Let who would lag behind, they intended going a-head and making money. There were a goodly number of them altogether, but one and all possessed the distinctive family trait—an eagerness to get money ; and, even when little children, were characterised by a fondness for making bargains with the advantage always on their side.

The father was a little, spare man, not by any means healthy looking, and with not an ounce of spare fat on him. He could not afford to have fat—scarcely flesh, one would say, to look at him. The mother was a tall, gaunt-looking woman, with high shoulders and high cheek bones, who moved about

with a slouching kind of gait, her head thrust forward, and her eyes everlastingly fixed on the ground, as though she expected to find some precious stone or pearl of price.

Early in life were the little Reeks, boys and girls, initiated into the mysteries of money making; and, when no more than three years of age, might be seen wandering about the roads and lanes seeking for cast horse shoes, or in the early spring and autumn mornings in old Wakem's meadows gathering mushrooms, all of which were turned into money. No family, however large, ever gleaned such quantities of corn in the golden harvest time as the Reek family, or gathered more elderberries for elder wine. Behind their cottage they had a tolerable piece of garden-ground, well stocked with gooseberry-bushes, currant-bushes, and fruit-trees: all its produce was sold, and it was currently believed that not a single apple, plum, or currant was ever eaten by any member of the family. Of course they kept a pig—what country family does not?—but how they found "wash" for it was a mystery never cleared up.

In short, the Reek family was a mean, grasping, sordid family, and the popular saying respecting them was, that "*They would skin a flint if they thought they could get a farthing by it.*" No one ever called at their house for a glass of water, no friend ever dropped in to have a social cup of tea, no little youngster ever begged for an apple on his way to school; there was

no cat or dog ever seen about the premises, and the boys kept no white mice or guinea-pigs, no birds or tame pets of any description—nay, it was generally believed they grudged the very bees the honey they managed to gather from the pea-blossoms and fruit-blossoms, for they cultivated no flowers.

Such was the Reek family.

As the younger members grew up into life they were started east, west, north, and south, to try and make their own fortunes, with the parental injunction ringing in their ears, "Whatever you do, *get on*." One evening, the youngest son, Stephen, looked in upon Lame Felix to bid him good-bye, as early on the following morning he was to start for London, where he was to commence life on his own account.

"Sit thee down, lad, sit thee down," said Felix. "So you are really going to London! Well, well, '*When the wings are ready the birds will fly*,' says the proverb; so I suppose it's natural for lads to feel home too small for them as they grow in years and strength. And what do you intend doing in London. Stephen, when you get there?"

"Well, Master Steadman, I intend trying to get on. You know a fellow must get on."

"Ah! I see, Stephen. You mean you intend to make money, and grow rich."

"That's about it, Master Felix; you've hit the right nail on the head this time. Yes, I mean to make money."

"And when you have made a good heap, what then, Stephen?"

"Why, I don't know ; make some more, I dare say."

"Yes, that will be it, Stephen, lad, a little more, a little more. Well says the proverb, '*No one says that his granary is full,*' and of riches no one ever has enough. But while you are toiling to heap up for yourself riches, remember what Solomon says—'*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold;*' and, again, —'*Better a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures and trouble therewith.*' And a greater than Solomon has said—'*What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*' for the soul is to last through all eternity, and riches but for a little space of time.

"You cannot carry your wealth away with you, however vast it may be ; recollect that '*Our last garment is made without pockets;*' we must leave all our money behind us ; it will not gain us admission into heaven ; truly says the proverb, '*A hammer of gold won't break heaven's gate.*' '*He that trusteth in riches shall fall,*' and '*Riches profit nothing in the day of wrath.*' A man may go on working and toiling from morning till night, and from youth until old age, to accumulate money, and at the end find he has made a grand mistake.

"I don't like a youth to set out on the journey of life with no nobler ambition than that of making

money; not but what I believe that money in the hand of a man who has sanctified his life with some high and noble purpose, may be the means of achieving much good; but it's the having nothing else in view but the getting of money that I dislike; the passion for which absorbs all purer and loftier aspirations, and in time turns the heart into a metal as hard and unimpressible as the gold itself.

"No, no; boys ought to have higher aims than mere money getting; yet in these days that is the meaning of success in life, and for that end boys are educated. They are not educated to become better, but that they may '*get on.*' If the two things can be combined, all good and well; if not the first, let the second come when it can. Now this is not as it should be. Youth is full of generous impulses and instincts which ought to be educated into convictions and principles, and in my humble way of looking at things, to stifle and repress them is a great sin, yet I am afraid it is done every day.

"You have most likely heard of the fable the ancients tell us—wise men those old fellows were—of a certain man named Midas who entreated the gods for *gold, gold*, nothing but *gold*; the gods heard his prayer, and granted him his wish, so that everything he touched turned into *gold*; he would caress his dog, and lo! it turned into *gold*; he would pat his horse, and it would be suddenly transformed into yellow metal; he would tie on his sandals, and find when

he had accomplished the feat that he must carry about something heavier than leather ; he would throw on his mantle, and discover it to be more weighty than cloth of gold ; and, worst of all, every morsel of food he attempted to eat became gold in his mouth—an indigestible kind of diet that. Of course the man died. The gods granted his prayer, but the gift proved his destruction ; so I greatly fear that the power of acquiring wealth is given to many who desire it intensely, and to the exclusion of all other gettings, and in the end it proveth their destruction.

“ What labour and toil men will go through to get money ! Years ago I knew a man, a journeyman pianoforte maker, whose great aim was to become rich. This was the sole idea that possessed him ; he thought of it all day, and dreamed about it at night. He drank nothing stronger than water—tea was too expensive a luxury, he would not indulge in that. He ate nothing but bread and treacle ; never expended a farthing in purchasing either cheese or butter, so that in time he became generally known by the name of ‘ *Treacle Bob*,’ and sometimes ‘ *Cold-water Bob*.’ He scraped and saved in every possible way ; and after work hours were over, toiled at home on his own account, and the day which is given us for rest he turned into a day of labour, wasting the hours which ought to have been devoted to God in work at the bench. He heeded not the sin, neither did he ever recollect the proverb which runs—‘ *Nothing is profit-*

able which is dishonest,' and all Sunday work is robbing God.

"After a time '*Treacle Bob*' was enabled to set up on his own account and have an apprentice: and by degrees, going on from step to step, he finally became a man of considerable wealth. But what good does his money do him? He is so shattered in health and ruined in constitution that he cannot enjoy it now he has it, and spends a little fortune every year in purchasing dinner pills, which he has to swallow before he can digest a bit of dinner.

"I saw him a little while since, and found him to be a cross, peevish, and snappish creature, with no one to love him, suspicious of everybody, never receiving a blessing from the poor, for I suppose he never gave away a farthing or a kind word all his life long; but, hated and despised by all who know him, he drags out a life which has become a burden to him, and which he is afraid to lay down because he is terrified at the very mention of the word death. When he dies, no one will shed a tear for him or plant a flower upon his grave, but the truth of the proverb will be illustrated which says—'*The miser does good only when he dies.*'

"Yes, yes, getting money is all very well, but recollect '*The chief end of man is not to get money*'—a true proverb that, and one which it would be well for those to bear in mind who make money the aim and end of life. Money does not make a man better, it does not im-

prove him even, although it might be used as an aid towards such an end. If you cover a stone with gold it will still be a stone, and a bad man covered with wealth is a bad man still.

“The proverb says, ‘*A rich man has many friends.*’ If you were to rub a man well over with treacle or honey, and stand him in the middle of a field on a hot summer’s day, he would not remain long without having plenty of company, such as flies, wasps, and insects of different sorts. Indeed, I once read of a man being put to death in that way—worse punishment than being tarred and feathered by the Yankees—and money is sure to attract numbers of human flies and wasps. After all, it is a true proverb which says that ‘*Money won’t do everything.*’ It can’t create a clean heart—it cannot prevent us from suffering pain and sorrow—it cannot banish care—it cannot drive away death from our door.

“You all know Farmer Bloomfield, over there at Black Notley; and knowing him, you also know what a kind and noble-hearted fellow he is. Well, he married late in life, and was well up in years when his fireside was brightened by the presence of a little daughter. How he and his wife loved the little creature! They lavished upon her all the love of which their hearts were capable, and that was not a little. And certainly she was deserving of their love. A pretty, bright little thing she was, to be sure—the merriment and sunshine of her home, a sunbeam that

warmed the hearts of her parents. And with all their fondness for her, and their way of petting her, and procuring her everything for which she expressed a fancy, she was not spoiled. On the contrary, it seemed to make her more loving and loveable.

"It was a pleasant sight to see her tripping by the side of her old father, as he walked about his fields looking after his labourers, or to see her darting in and out of every room in the house after her mother; while on market days her bright little face might be seen between that of the old couple, as they drove to market in their old-fashioned chaise; and never was the journey made alone by either father or mother without their returning with pockets filled with presents for their Maggie. In short, nothing could exceed the love they cherished for their bright-eyed darling.

"One day the dear little thing sickened with scarlet fever, and grew worse and worse. All the doctors in the county were sent for, while the poor parents were beside themselves with grief and apprehension. But nothing could do the child good. God wanted her in His own beautiful home—to be a flower in His own garden.

"I was with her on the day she died, and never shall I forget the grief of the old couple as every hope of keeping their darling gradually faded from their mind. In a moment of despair the poor father pulled out his cheque-book, and, laying it before the doctor,

said, '*Doctor, only save her, and you may write down what sum you please.*' But the doctor only shook his head.

"The dear thing died, and it seemed as though years were added in that little time to the age of the Bloomfields. The sorrowful are comforted of God, and let us hope God has been very tender to the poor bereaved parents. Truly '*Money won't do everything.*'

"No, money will not save us from death. I once read of a rich man, who, when dying, called for his bags of gold; and, when they were brought, he laid one of the bags on his heart. After a little while, he said—'*Take it away! It will not do! It will not do!*' No, no, it is better, as some one has said, *to have gold in the hand than in the heart.*

"Beware, boys, of wishing to make money solely because *it is money*; always make it a secondary object, never the ultimate, then I can heartily say, God make you successful, for the nobler parts of your nature will not then be ruined, but kept alive and active for your fellow-creatures' good, and for the glory of your God.

"Those who make haste to get rich subject themselves to great temptations. They don't like to go the beaten highway, but choose rather to make a short cut, go a muddy by-lane, soil their conscience, degrade themselves in their own estimation and in the pure eyes of the Great Judge. Remember, '*A clear conscience is a good pillow,*' and, '*Better a pain in the pocket*

than the heart.' Solomon says, '*The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death ;*' and again, '*He who makes haste to be rich shall not be innocent.*'

"Success ! Yes, it is right to wish to be successful ; but then you must go about it in a straight and honourable way, and in a right spirit, '*little by little, step by step.*' If you watch a man climbing up a ladder, you will not see him take one spring from the bottom to the top ; he goes up one rung at a time. And so with the getting on in life ; it must be one step at a time, not one spring, thinking to arrive at the end directly. Recollect the proverbs, '*Hasty climbers have sudden falls,*' '*Haste trips up its own heels.*'

"If you see boys running a race, you will find that those who start off at their utmost speed soon tire, loose wind, drop from the front rank, lag behind, and finally come in at the end. You must husband your resources and reserve your strength. Do not expend all in one effort, like a sky-rocket, up and out in a few seconds. Cultivate the power of *holding on*—persevere, that is : '*The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.*' Sometimes the tortoise wins and the hare loses. It's the power of holding on which does it, adhering firmly and steadfastly to one pursuit, one object at a time.

"A proverb says—'*The tree often transplanted is never laden with fruit,*' and a youth who skips first to one thing and then to another, and then to a third, is

not likely to gain much from either. Keep steady to one thing at a time. Some one has said that a butterfly visits more flowers in the course of a day than a bee, but which gathers the most honey? There is a story told of a Chinese student who, when advised by his friends to change his occupation to one in which he might have a greater chance of success, cast an iron slab as an emblem of his unalterable determination, saying : *When by grinding my ink I wear a hole through this, then will my resolution change.*

"The secret of all success is perseverance. '*Nothing is hard to a willing mind.*' '*It is the hardest part of success to gain a little; that once gained, more will easily follow.*' A celebrated scholar took for his emblem a man hewing away at a mountain with a pickaxe, with the motto underneath, '*Little by little.*'

"It is because lads are impatient, and expect too much from a single effort, that they are not more successful. Recollect what a wise man has said : '*To create a little flower is the work of ages;*' and to be successful, you must toil more than a single night.

"Most boys start off without any knowledge of the real elements of success, and are discouraged and give up in despair because they fail; whereas, if they would only use what brains nature has blessed them with, they might save themselves from such a fate. If you set off on a journey of a dozen miles, and at the end of the first mile sit down disappointed because the journey is not finished, you will never accomplish it—

yet it is in some such spirit that many lads set out to be successful—but if, after the first mile, you still keep on perseveringly, you will feel that every step you take brings you nearer your desired end.

“Says the Chinese proverb, ‘*If one has a mind to beat the stone, the stone will have a hole in it.*’ And there is a story told of a youth who, as he one day went home from school, saw a woman grinding an iron crowbar, and, asking her why she was doing so, the woman replied, that she intended grinding it down to make a needle. An illustration of perseverance, and as I have before said, perseverance is one of the principal elements of success.

“Another is contained in the proverb which says, ‘*Never put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day.*’ This is one of the proverbs to which Lord Brougham is said to have owed all his success ; and although a witty Frenchman has said, that he owed all his to ‘*Never doing to-day what he could put off till to-morrow,*’ I fancy he found very few things he could put off. The farmers have a wise saying, which runs—‘*What ought to be done to-day, do it, for to-morrow it may rain,*’ meaning to say, that if a man neglects the opportunity to do a thing which ought to be done, the opportunity may never occur again.

“Another thing you should bear in mind, and which also constitutes another element of success, is *to do one thing at a time*—this was another of Lord Brougham’s maxims. Powers and energies are

wasted by being expended on too many things at a time ; by having too many irons in the fire, not one gets thoroughly heated, and the whole of them very often puts the fire out ; the stream which branches off in a great many directions, so that the water is shallow when it reaches the mill-wheel, does not turn it very swiftly, and consequently, grinds very little corn.

“One morning, a spider began to weave his web on the branch of a tree, just in the neighbourhood of a plump young fly, which the spider intended should serve him for his breakfast, if he could but finish his web and invite it in before it should fly away. By the time the web was half-spun, a gay-winged butterfly alighted close by. ‘Ay,’ said the spider, ‘that looks more attractive ; if I could but get him now, I should have a delicate morsel.’ Leaving his half-spun web, away ran the spider to commence a new one near the butterfly ; but before he had anything liked finished it, the butterfly spread its wings and flew away ; so, with a growl of disappointment, he ran back to web number one ; but had no sooner begun his work anew, when a magnificent fat blue bottle settled itself on a twig a little further off. ‘Oh ! there’s a beauty. If I can only catch him !’ and away he scampered for victim number three.

“And so the spider kept running from one twig to another, attracted by first this opportunity for securing a fine victim, and then by that, until he had con-

sumed all his web-making material for weaving snares. In this way a great number of people act ; they dance first to one thing and then to another, do a little piece of this and a little piece of that, but never finishing anything. If you wish to be successful, learn to do one thing at a time.

“After all, the getting on in life, the being successful in the things of this world, is not by any means the highest good ; there is another life to look forward to after this is ended, a longer and more important life than ever this can be ; and very often success in this means failure in that. Better be poor here and rich there, than rich here and poor there ; better fail here and be successful there, than successful here and fail there.

“This life has such important issues that we need be careful how we act, that when the day of reckoning comes we may not be found wanting. It is natural and right that you should wish to be successful in this world, that each one should wish and strive to get on. But, while it is so, always remember that there are higher successes than that of mere money-making, which are open for all to compete for, and which all must strive after, or incur the possibility of a fearful peril.”



CHAPTER V.

WHAT JAME' FELIX SAID CONCERNING
LOOKING-UP.

"He who gropes in the gutter will dirty his fingers."

"He that falls in the dirt, the longer he lies the dirtier he is."

"Without pains no gains."

"Stars do not lie on the ground."

"Look up, for the heavens are over all."

"The higher you climb the more you can see."



CHAPTER V.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING LOOKING-UP.

STEPHEN REEK had made his farewells, and, staff in hand, had started on his long walk to London to make his fortune. Lame Felix's talk concerning money-getting seemed to agree with him about as much as vinegar would with an infant, and I expect very few of the proverbs and precepts lingered in his mind by the time he reached London. But Felix himself seemed much concerned to know that a mere lad, as Stephen was, should be blessed with none of the higher, nobler, and more generous impulses of youth,—which is its charm and glory, and gives to it that beauty which after years destroy;—and on the following evening, while seated on the bench outside his cottage door with several boys round him, his mind seemed still full of the lad, and what his probable fate would likely be.

It was a beautiful evening, the sky was deepening into purple, here and there a shaft of starlight quivered, the breeze had hushed itself into rest, no leaves stirred, and no bird woke the silence with its song.

"Boys," commenced Felix, pointing up to the sky; "boys, do you see that bright star up yonder? Is it not beautiful? What diamond ever flashed purer or brighter light? Soon the whole heavens will be crowded with stars. But if a boy were to look continually on the ground, and never lift his eyes up to God's sky, he would never see the stars; they might shine there in all their beauty, but he be never the wiser. It is a true proverb which says, '*He who never looks up at the sky sees no stars;*' and again, '*He whose eyes are continually bent on the ground sees nothing but dirt.*'

"You who have read John Bunyan's grand old Book, '*The Pilgrim's Progress*'—which the more I read the more I love—will remember that part where Mr Interpreter showed Christiana and her children over the house. Get me the book, and I will read you the passage. Ah! here it is:

"'And he showed them into a room where there was a man that could look no way but downwards, with a muck-rake in his hand. There stood also one over his head with a celestial crown in his hand, and proffered him that crown for his muck-rake; but the man did neither look up nor regard, but raked to

himself the straws, the small sticks, and the dust of the floor. Then said Christiana, "I persuade myself that I know something the meaning of this; for this is a figure of a man of this world, is it not so, good sir?" "Thou hast said the right," said he, "and this muck-rake doth show his carnal mind. And whereas thou seest him give more heed to rake up straws, and sticks, and the dust of the floor, than to what he says that calls to him from above with the crown in his hand, it is to show that heaven is but a fable to some, and that things here are counted the only things substantial. Now, whereas it was also showed thee that the man could look no way but downwards, it is to let thee know that earthly things when they are with power upon men's minds, quite carry their hearts away from God."

"This was true in John Bunyan's day, and it is true now. If a lad begins life *mud-rake* in hand, with no higher aim than raking unto himself riches and the things of this world, paying no heed to glorious worlds above and around him, what can be the end of it all but the fearful curse of not being able to look up, and his nature becoming narrow and hard? '*He whose face is never turned up to the stars receives none of heaven's brightness,*' says one proverb; while another runs—'*He whose face gives no light shall never become a star,*' and where is the light to be obtained but by looking up?

"I once heard of a young man, who one day picked

up a sovereign lying in the road. Ever afterwards, in walking along, he kept his eyes fixed steadily upon the ground, in hopes of finding another. And in the course of a long life he did pick up, at different times, a goodly number of coins, gold and silver. But all these years, while he was looking for them, he saw not that the heavens were bright above him, and Nature looked beautiful around. He never once allowed his eyes to look up from the mud and filth, in which he sought his treasure ; and when he died—a rich, old man—he only knew this fair earth as a dirty road to pick up money as you walk along.

“ You cannot give what you do not receive, and it is impossible to receive anything unless you go to the right source. If you wish for the smile and approval of God, it is not to be gained by groping in the gutter. You must look up ; His influence cometh from above. I am told that the eyes of men who spend their lives studying the heavens and the hosts of stars, acquire a wonderful depth of mystic light, as though some of the awful light of the midnight skies had fallen into them. The Scripture says—‘ *Look up to the hills from whence cometh your strength,*’ and it is the high things in nature, and the high things of God which elevate the mind and life.

“ Do you think the grand singer of Israel, King David, was not accustomed to look up to the heavens ? Could he say, or sing, all those wonderful things about the stars if he had not done so ? Many and many

a time, while I have been keeping my solitary watch at sea, have I looked up to the heavens, and repeated to myself the grand words of the poet-king—‘*When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?*’ ‘*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.*’ ‘*Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain; who maketh the clouds His chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind.*’ Depend upon it, David felt the wonderful mystery of the stars, as night after night he gazed up at their beauty and brightness.

“Look up, boys, look up. You can never expect to attain to any greater moral or mental height unless you look up. One morning a little slender stem, surrounded by bushes and undergrowth, and overshadowed by giant trees of the forest, murmured to itself, ‘Am I ever to remain obscured from a clear view of the sky, from the warmth of the sun, and the freshness of the dews? I should like to be taller than I am, to attain to a height where I could breathe more freely than I do here, where I am hid from sight.’ ‘Have patience, and look up,’ said the black earth which surrounded its roots; ‘have patience, and look up while you struggle, and one day your wish will become a realisation.’

“So the slender stem murmured no more, but day after day patiently and perseveringly toiled and waited, ever keeping its gaze fixed upon the little

patch of blue sky it could discern between the leafy branches of a tree.

“As the time passed on, it grew stronger and stronger, and taller and taller, until at last it shot up above all the rest, and became the highest of all the trees of the forest, and the bright sun shone upon it during the day, and moon-beams and star-beams glided in and out among its leaves during the cool, silent night.

“Always look up to something or somebody higher than yourself; never look down for the object and the model. I pity a lad who has not some one to whom he looks up, whom he admires, and almost worships, whose words he is fond of quoting, and whose actions he emulates. This hero-worship is the salvation of boys. It keeps them from doing mean things, it keeps them from being unjust, and learns them to love that which is noble and great; and in the degree that the admiration and love for high things is active love, shall we grow like unto the thing or person adored.

“A boy satisfied with himself, and finding nothing to admire beyond himself, is in a very bad condition, and requires to go through a course of moral medicine, in the same way that we have to resort to a course of physic when the body is out of order. To look down is bad, to look no higher than yourself is bad, but to look up far above you is the thing to do, and to be continually doing; for it must follow, as the

light follows darkness, that you grow better, and, as I said just now, grow like unto the object gazed at. Moses, when he came down from the Mount, had acquired some of the eternal brightness. If you look up to the heavens you will acquire some of their depth and brightness, and your mind be filled with high thoughts.

"A very charming American writer* tells us the story of a boy who dwelt in a spacious and fertile valley embosomed amongst lofty mountains. Thousands of people dwelt in this valley, some in lonely log-huts, some in farm-houses, while others congregated together and dwelt in populous villages.

"The boy lived with his widowed mother in a lonely cottage; right opposite their cottage door, but miles away, the mountains had formed themselves into the resemblance of a gigantic human face, which, when the sun shone upon it, assumed a grand and noble expression, as if a great warm human heart glowed in its bosom, with affections strong enough to embrace all mankind. The writer goes on to say, it was quite an education in itself even to grow up beneath its shadow, and have its vast features constantly before the eye, and many people believed that the fertility of the valley was owing to the grand, sweet smile of this face.

"One day the boy said to his mother he wished that this face could speak, for it looked so kindly that

* Nathaniel Hawthorne.

its voice must be pleasant, and if ever he saw a human face similar to it he should love it dearly. His mother told him that one day some one was to be born and grow up in the valley, whose features were to resemble those of the great face. And the boy hoped he should live to see the fortunate man.

“The boy never forgot this. He spent his childhood in the log-hut with his mother, and was dutiful to her, helping her in many ways with his little hands, but more with his loving heart.

“From a happy childhood he grew up into a quiet, thoughtful boy, and one that showed signs of great intelligence, yet his only teacher had been the great face, for being a poor lad he was compelled to toil all day in the fields ; but at evening, when the day was ended and work over, he would sit outside his cottage door and look lovingly up at the vast face, which he sometimes fancied appeared to answer his gaze with a benevolent smile, as though it understood the reverence with which he regarded it.

“About this time, continues the writer, a report circulated itself throughout the valley, that the great man so long looked for had at last appeared. A man, who had left the valley when a youth, and entered into mercantile and commercial speculations, had become blessed with immense stores of wealth, with which he was about to retire to spend the remainder of his days amidst the scenes of his childhood and youth ; and the rumour had spread that in

features he was like unto the stone face. The boy's heart beat high with expectation, although at first he could not but wonder how it was possible that a man, whose whole life had been spent in money getting, could ever have attained unto such majestic beauty and grandeur as that of the stone face ; but he reasoned down this doubt, for he felt that a man possessed of unlimited wealth had at his command means for doing good on a great and benevolent scale. So, on the day when the rich man was expected, the boy—whose name was Ernest—left his labour and went out on the road with many others to catch the first glimpse of the man of money.

"When the man made his appearance, the people shouted, 'He is the very image of the stone face !' Yet Ernest turned sadly away, for he saw nothing but a yellow, wrinkled, and sordid visage ; but as he walked slowly home, disappointment throbbing in his heart, the great face seemed to whisper, 'Fear not, he will come ! Fear not, the man will come !'

"Years passed away, and Ernest grew to be a man. The stone face was still his teacher, and filled his heart with noble sympathies, and his mind with lofty thoughts, and beautiful conceptions of a higher order than those which occupied other hearts and minds. Ernest still wondered the likeness to the great stone face did not make his appearance. True, a great warrior, who had fought his country's battles, came, and people would have it that his war-scarred visage

was like unto it ; and after the warrior came a great senator and orator, who was know far and wide as 'Silver Tongue,' so great was his power of eloquence. But in neither of these could Ernest trace any likeness to the mighty face ; the stern countenance of the warrior had none of its sublime benevolence, while the statesman's features were too careworn and troubled to retain even a shadow of the majestic calmness which charaterised the Titantic face.

"Years passed away, and Ernest became old ; his hair became silvered with age, while time engraved innumerable wrinkles upon his forehead and face. But not in vain had he grown old ; more than the white hairs on his head were the wise thoughts in his mind. And he had ceased to be obscure ; fame had come to him in his humble cottage, and beyond the limits of the valley had made him known in the world. The report went abroad that this simple labourer in the fields had thoughts and ideas unlike those of other men, but of a higher tone, as if he had talked with angels as his daily friends. From far and near many men came to see and converse with Ernest ; and while he talked with them, his face would kindle un-awares, and shine upon them as with a mild evening light.

"While Ernest had been growing old, God had given a new poet to the earth. He also was a native of the valley, but had spent his life far removed from it, and had poured out the sweet music of his song amid

the noise and bustle of crowded cities ; but often did the mountains, among which he had dwelt when a boy, gleam in his verse ; the great stone face, also, was not forgotten ; everything of which he sang—mountain, sea, sky, woods, or mankind, received an added glory from his song. Ernest read the words of this son of genius, and, as some verse thrilled his soul, he looked up to the great face before him, saying, ‘ O majestic friend, is not this man worthy to resemble thee ? ’

“ Now, it so happened that the fame of Ernest had reached the ears of the poet, and he desired to see him ; so one morning he set out on a journey with that intention, and at evening time found himself near the cottage of Ernest, where he saw an old man seated with an open book in his hand. The poet solicited a night’s lodging. ‘ Willingly,’ said Ernest, ‘ and methinks the great stone face never looked so kindly on any stranger before.’ The poet seated himself, and he and his host conversed together, and Ernest was stirred and agitated by the living images, shapes of beauty and loveliness, which the poet flung out of his mind, while he in his turn had never before held intercourse with one to whom great and sublime truths were so familiar. As Ernest listened, he fancied the great face bent forward to listen too, and he said—

“ ‘ Who are you, my strangely-gifted guest ? ’

“ Laying his finger on the volume Ernest held in

his hand, he replied, 'I wrote those, therefore you know me.'

"Ernest looked searchingly into the face of the poet, and then into that of his majestic friend's, but his countenance fell, and he turned away his head with a sigh.

" 'Why are you sad ?' said the poet.

" 'I have waited all my life,' said Ernest, 'to see the man appear who was to resemble that mighty face, and the man who could sing so divinely as he who wrote these poems I thought must be he.'

" 'Know, Ernest,' replied the poet, 'that my life has not accorded with my song ; it has been passed among mean and sordid realities, and I lack faith at times even in what I sing.'

"When the time of sunset arrived, Ernest, accompanied by the poet, took his way down the valley, for at this hour of the day it was his usual custom to address a number of the neighbouring inhabitants of the valley in the open air. He stood up to speak, and, as he spake words full of wisdom and life, his features assumed a look in harmony with the ideas which he was uttering. The glory of the setting sun shone upon his face, and, as the poet gazed at it, and at the same time looked up and saw the benevolent sublimity of the mighty mountain face, he threw up his arms as if moved by a mighty impulse, and shouted, 'Behold, behold, Ernest is himself the likeness of the great stone face !'

LOOKING UP, AND CLIMBING UP! 85

“And the people looked, and saw what the poet had said was true.

“So you see, boys, it is not gold, nor fighting, nor eloquence, nor beautiful sentiments, that go to the making of the greatest of men, only so far as they are used as means towards an end, and not made an end in themselves, but it is looking up to something or some one above you.

“Looking up and climbing up should be the watch-words of your life. If you look up to great things, and strive to attain unto them, you will be fulfilling the intention of your creation in a noble way. High aims make a pure life; to live among high things is grand. The eagle, who makes his home on the jutting mountain crag, is able to bathe himself in the full blaze of the sun, and you never heard of an owl doing that.

“Aim high, even if you fail; for better a high aim and failure than a low aim and success. You may find it difficult to climb to great heights at first, but it becomes easier after a time. Men whose lives are passed in mountain-climbing acquire great facility in their work; the muscles of the feet and legs attain to great elasticity, combined with strength, so that they ascend height after height, spring from crag to crag with all the ease and lightness of a mountain goat.

“Those who never ascend to great heights lose some wonderful sights, for the higher you climb the

- wider your view, the more you comprehend in your range of vision.

“One day an American Indian, who had passed his whole life in threading the pathways of his native woods, and who thought that the forest was the whole of creation, came to the foot of a high mountain, up whose side he began to climb. He was surprised, as he mounted higher and higher, how much more he saw at a single glance than he had ever before done in the shady recesses of the forest; and he reasoned within himself that if he climbed higher he would be able to command a still more extended view; so hands and feet went to work again, and with much toil and labour, and at the expense of many hurts and bruises, he at length reached the mountain-top, where a glorious prospect greeted his eyes—the bending tops of thousands upon thousands of trees, wide, grassy plains, silvery streams of water, broad and deep, and beyond them towns and villages thronged with inhabitants; but, on one side, beyond the forest, rolled and heaved the waters of the grand old ocean. The Indian had never seen such a sight before, and his heart throbbed with a feeling of deep awe and wonder; and, kneeling down, he adored in silence the great God of his nation who could work such mighty wonders.

“I suppose it is scarcely any use to speak to you, boys, about the peace and calmness there is in great things and great heights? At your age you like bustle



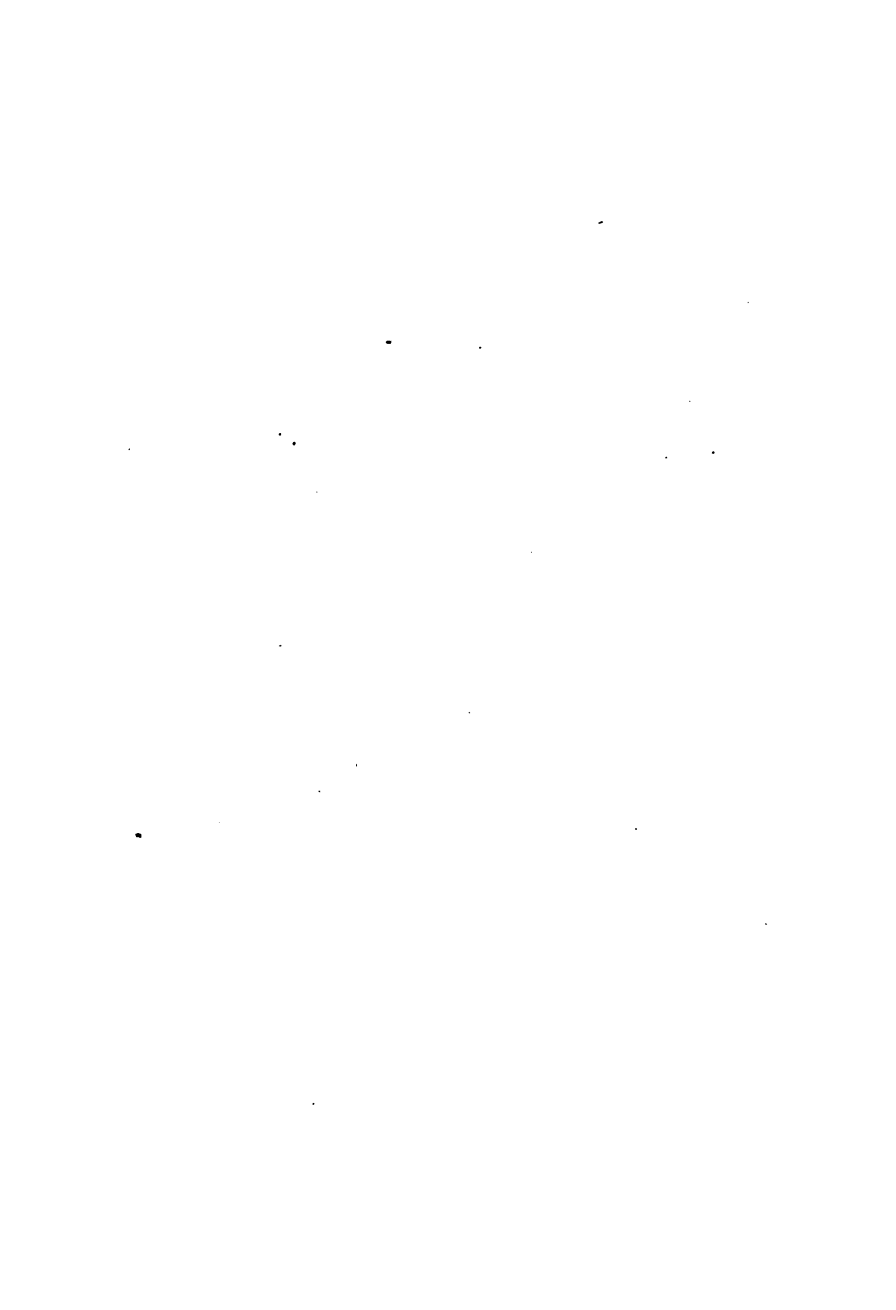
'The Indian had never seen such a sight before; and, kneeling down, he adored in silence the great God of his nation.' —LAME FELIX, page 86.



and excitement, noise and tumult ; but, nevertheless, there is a wonderful calmness and peace in mountain solitudes. I have stood on mountain crags and seen the tempest rage beneath, not above me ; where I stood not a throb disturbed the quiet ; beneath were clouds, but where I stood the mountain was bathed in sunlight ; if I wanted to get into the uproar and the tempest I was obliged to descend.

“So great heights in life are pervaded by a stillness and calm—great thoughts and great ideas, are quiet thoughts and quiet ideas ; they come in silence, not in noise. But I fear it is of no use speaking to you of quiet things while the blood pulsates madly through your veins, and you look forward to the strife and contention you are to wage among your fellows in the world. Recollect, however, to aim high ; ‘*set your affections on things above.*’ You have the greatest of all examples you can strive to imitate ; One who is not only a model but a helper, who is ever willing to stretch out a hand to help you up to great heights ; and if by His aid you strive to attain unto His likeness and to be where He is, you will in time reach the highest of all high heights it is possible for human creatures to attain. *Look up, boys, look up, and climb up.*”





CHAPTER VI.

THE RIVAL SCHOOLS.—A TALK ABOUT
FIGHTING.

"Quarrelling dogs come halting home."

"If you will not hear Reason, she will surely rap your knuckles."

"The dog that is quarrelsome and not strong, woe to his hide."

"He overcometh a stout enemy that overcometh his own passion."

"When passion enters at the foregate, wisdom goes out at the postern."

"Gentleness does more than violence."

"Soft words hurt not the mouth."

"Patience is a plaister for all sorcs."



CHAPTER VI.

THE RIVAL SCHOOLS.—A TALK ABOUT FIGHTING.

IN almost every small town there are rival schools, between the different scholars of which a jealousy, and sometimes an enmity, exists. Every opportunity is sought to give expression to these feelings, either by words or blows, so that a constant warfare is kept up, and continual skirmishes are taking place, in which the smaller boys come off second best; for, being less able to take care of themselves, they are waylaid and thrashed in quiet corners and solitary places, where their cries can bring no companions to their assistance. Very frequently this rivalry exists between schools of the same standing, but more often between the boys of the respectable school and those who are so low down in the world as to attend that aided, and almost supported, by charity.

Braintree was no exception to this rule. A fierce

antagonism existed between the scholars of "*Saltmarsh's Commercial Academy*," and those who received their education at the school connected with Bocking Chapel. Both schools were situated in Bocking, but the majority of the pupils were Braintree boys.

Saltmarsh's Academy was frequented by tradesmen's sons; the chapel school by the children of mechanics and labourers. Saltmarsh's pupils were paid for quarterly; the scholars of the chapel school had to pay the sum of one penny weekly, which, if they were not punctual in bringing on the stipulated day, were sent back home again with strict injunctions not to return without it.

The young gentlemen of Saltmarsh's Academy were taught unheard-of accomplishments, and every year made a public exhibition of their skill in penmanship in Joscelyn, the bookseller's windows, in High Street. The boys of the chapel school were taught to read by boys of the same age, or older than themselves, from boards hung up round the school; to draw animals on a black board, the four first rules of arithmetic on slates, and writing in books. Saltmarsh presided over his establishment with the supposed kindness and benignity of a man of culture, with whom no pupil ever ventured to take liberties. The less fortunate scholars of the chapel school were superintended by one who had received the cognomen of "*Cock Bantam*"—from the obstinate character of his hair, which would never lie smooth—and whose

principal occupation consisted in walking from one end of the school-room to the other over the desks, thrashing the boys as he went with a formidable cane. Sometimes a pupil would so far forget the respect due to a schoolmaster, as to try and throw him down between the forms, when the whole school would be in an uproar.

These and various other causes were the avowed reasons for the hostility existing between the two schools, and the perpetual warfare which the boys carried on with each other, in summer with stones and sticks, in winter with snow-balls, and throughout the whole year by irritating words, in the course of which the local proverb (though it could not strictly apply to either school) was bandied backwards and forwards—

“ Braintree boys, brave boys ;
Bocking boys, rats ;
Church Street, puppy dogs ;
High Garret, cats.”

It so happened that one evening, after a grand field-day, when the fighting had been unusually severe—many of the combatants going home with swollen noses, scratched faces, black eyes, and torn clothes—several boys found their way to the cottage of *Lame Felix*, who knew of the rivalry and had heard of the fight.

“ So, so, boys,” he began, “ there has been a general engagement, I hear, with a long list of wounded.

When is all this quarrelling to end? And to what good does it lead? I am afraid very few of you pay attention to the golden rule, or else your fighting propensities are very strong. What particular pleasure do you feel in having such a large nose as I see some of you have? or such highly-coloured circles round your eyes? Take my advice, boys, and leave off this foolish fighting; and, if you must fight, there are plenty of ways in which you can do so with credit to yourself, and benefit to others.

“I shan’t forget in a hurry what a Quaker once said to me, many years ago now. I was a boy at the time. Quarrelling with one of my companions, in a fit of passion I knocked him down. A Quaker passing by laid his hand on my shoulder, saying, ‘Dost thou think thee can thank God for knocking thy friend down? Thou must have a queer conscience if thou canst. Thee shouldst remember God did not give unto thee strength to use it in that fashion. Strength was given thee to overcome the enemies of thine own bosom, and passion I take to be one of them. Before thou doest the like again, ask thyself whether thou canst thank God afterwards.’ Many a time since have I asked myself the question.

“Boys, there is so much to fight for, and against, in this world, that one had need reserve all his strength, or he may chance to get the worst of the battle; and remember that to ‘*him who overcometh*’ is the palm of victory alone given.

"Life has been compared to many things—to a journey, a race, a pilgrimage, a ship crossing the ocean. But to my mind the truest of all comparisons is that of its being a warfare—a battle.

"Fighting seems to be the grand necessity of life. There are two opposing forces in the world always struggling for the mastery; they are as opposite to each other as light is to darkness. SIN and GOODNESS are the two forces, and both take up their abode in every human heart, and there fight their battles, and there the one or the other gains its victory, or suffers its defeat.

"Though they are but two forces, they take many shapes, assume many disguises, and answer to many different names. Sometimes they are called *Inclination* and *Duty*. Duty says, '*You must do this;*' while Inclination replies, '*No; this is much the pleasanter. I much prefer doing this.*' And at it they go, and if in earnest they have a terrible fight.

"Inclination is a big, huge-limbed kind of creature, fond of its own ease, disliking pain and the doing of disagreeable things. Duty is a brave, active, wiry little creature, clear-eyed and strong featured, able to endure much and often, never fighting shy of a thing because it is likely to give pain or sorrow; its voice has a brave ring in it, like the sound of the trumpet which calls the soldier to battle. There is a proverb I have heard which says—'*Duty's voice is calm and clear, he who lists may always hear.*' Inclination has

a wheedling, oily, seductive kind of voice ; not a voice that rouses, but one the tones of which enervate.

“Well, these two creatures have many battles in every human heart ; for, although it loves ease and pleasure, Inclination is terribly strong, and very often gets the victory. But if Duty, active and adroit, can but get a firm grip of its throat and hold on, *then* will Inclination be vanquished, although not killed. It will spring up into life and strength on the morrow ; but every victory which is gained over it renders it less and less powerful.

“Every boy’s heart is a battle-field, where these opposing forces fight, and he has the option of aiding the one force or the other. He can always hear the clear tones of Duty’s voice, he cannot mistake them ; and if when he hears its trumpet tones he will but arouse himself, and say, ‘*Tis duty’s call, I must obey,*’ and turn a deaf ear to Inclination’s enticing words, he will be aiding the good force to gain the victory.

“These two forces frequently appear in another form—the one as a red-faced, fiery-eyed little gentleman, who has a word and a blow for everybody and everything. I see that many boys court his acquaintance, and pay no attention to his sweet-eyed, calm-faced companion, who is yet the best and most worthy of the two. The fiery little gentleman is named *PASSION*, the other, *GENTLENESS*. *Passion* seems always to have the best of it ; it asserts itself so loudly, and will hear no reason, and is more like an animal than any-

thing else. Gentleness is quiet, calm ; its tone is low, but very sweet. Its voice is not heard in uproar and tumult ; it never speaks at those times, it stands quietly on one side, and looks on ; but its eyes have a magical influence, it stills the storm ; the storm may beat against it, but all is quiet and immovable. It always reminds me of rocks I have seen in the ocean, which remain firm and steadfast while the angry waves dash up against them ; the fury of the sea sweeps over them, but all in vain, when the sea is again calm, there the rocks stand, firm as ever.

“ Boys, which of the two combatants will you encourage ? Shall it be the most noisy one, the most vehement, or the other ? Which, think you, is the most powerful—the thunder-storm or the gentle dew, and the soft, sweet, refreshing rain ?

“ Passion is a fearful fellow to side with. The proverb says, ‘ *Passion maketh a man a beast ;*’ and another, ‘ *Passionate men, like fleet hounds, are apt to overrun the mark ;*’ while some Roman philosopher says, ‘ *A passionate man opens his mouth and shuts his eyes*’—that is as much as to say, while in a passion he goes blindly at anything, for true it is that ‘ *Passionate men heed no counsel,*’ and ‘ *Passion is a short madness.*’

“ What things have been done in passionate moments ! deeds which a whole lifetime has not been able to blot out from the memory. ‘ *Passion begins with folly and ends with repentance ;*’ but repentance can’t always repair the mischief passion does.

Passion is often more hurtful than the injury which caused it.

“I remember an incident which occurred a few weeks after I was apprenticed, and which I have often thought of since. In the same shop where I worked was another lad, about my own age, named Sampson.—‘*Passionate Sampson*,’ the men called him, because on the slightest provocation he was beside himself with passion, and capable of doing the rashest of actions. Many of the men played off harmless tricks upon him, on purpose to see him indulge in a fit. This was wrong, of course, for if we know a neighbour or companion has a fault—and which of us has not?—we have no right to foster it and make it worse, but, on the contrary, should strive all we can to assist our neighbour or companion to root it up and cast it on one side. But the men did not do this for ‘*Passionate Sampson*.’

“There was one man in particular who could never leave him alone long at a time. One day he was passing the lad’s bench, when he squirted some cold water on the back of his head. Sampson was using a quarter chisel at the time; directly he felt the water, he turned round, and threw the chisel with all his force at his tormentor. It entered the man’s knee, making a terribly dangerous wound, and with a cry of pain he fell to the ground. His shopmates ran to his assistance, and picking him up, conveyed him home on a shutter, and then fetched a surgeon.

'Passionate Sampson' turned very pale when he saw what mischief he had done, while his passion vanished in a moment. He was locked up in jail for a few days, for it was thought the man would die.

"However, things did not come to so bad a pass as that, and Sampson was released; but it was a long time before the man at whom he had thrown the chisel, was able to return to his employment; and although after many weeks he was able to get about again, he walked a little lame ever afterwards. Sampson repented of the action the instant it was done, but all the repentance in the world could not undo the mischief.

"Beware of anger, boys; guard and arm yourself against it. There is an armoury ready for you, where you may go and equip yourself, and a good sword waiting ready for you to wield it. I will tell you where the armoury is, and what the sword is presently; but hear now what Solomon says concerning passion or anger. He says: '*Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous.*' '*Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.*' '*He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly.*' '*An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.*' '*Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go.*'

"Fight against Passion, have nothing to do with it; cultivate the friendship of gentleness and you will not be likely to do an action which, like a snake,

will turn and sting you. Great is the power of gentleness; it is powerful, yet tender; strong, yet wonderfully considerate. An earthquake—which I always like to think of as the earth in a passion—may, and does, rend rocks asunder, destroy villages, towns, and sometimes even cities; it spreads ruin and desolation to both habitation and man. I have seen volcanoes vomiting forth streams of red-hot lava, which has destroyed beautiful vineyards and many houses. The silent dew, the gentle, refreshing rain, maketh the corn to grow and become ripe for the harvest, and the garden to bloom with lovely flowers, and covereth the earth with beautiful green; while hedgerow and meadow rejoice in treasures of loveliness.

“When you come to think about it, boys, what a deal you have to fight against, instead of with each other. Of course, as I said before, it is only different aspects of that one force, power, or personality, called Sin. It seems to me a man cannot possess a good quality without a bad one trying to grow by its side, and it is this you have constantly to root up; as a careful gardener is ever on the watch to see that no noisome weeds spring up to carry all the nutriment away from his plants, so you must be careful not to let a bad quality creep up by the side of a good one.

“You must be as watchful as sentinels in the time of war when enemies are on the alert, and ready to take advantage of the least carelessness.

“I have told you that I should like each and all of

you boys to side with Duty and Gentleness in the battle of life, and not with Inclination and Passion. Now, there is one other thing I should like you to do battle for, and that is cheerfulness. Cheerfulness will enable you to fight well; some lads I have known have thought moodiness, ill-humour, and sulkiness, much better than *Cheerfulness*. But I say, fight for cheerfulness; encourage it. There is a proverb which says, '*God helps a merry fellow*;' and another '*Laughter does good to the blood*;' while a third runs, '*Every time you laugh you take a nail from your coffin*.' A cheerful, merry fellow is like sunshine in a home, and a blessing to his friends.

"A sulky spirit is not by any means the best spirit with which to begin life, no one cares to be friendly with such a lad. He is like a human hedgehog, prickly all over, and if touched is more likely to wound than anything else. '*Every house sees the sun*,' says the proverb, and every boy experiences the mercy and care of our great Heavenly Father, and to me it seems very ungrateful to reflect back all His mercy and kindness with a surly countenance, and to look up to His skies with a sour face. Cares, troubles, and trials will have to be battled with as you go on in life, and you have more chances of success if you go at them with a cheerful heart, than if you view them surlily and fight discontentedly. Solomon says, '*Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a walled city*.'

“But you cannot do this effectually unless you seek help from some one or something higher than yourself. A little boy, climbing up a hill, gets to the top much quicker and safer if an elder brother lends him a hand; men who traverse mountains secure safety and strength by linking themselves together. ‘*Union is strength,*’ and if, in the course of your life climbing and life fighting, you bind yourself to some one who is mightier than you, you will come off more than conqueror. Arm yourself ready for the fight. Do what the Apostle tells you, ‘*Put on the whole armour of God;*’ there is nothing like it for protecting the wearer; with that securely clasped and fastened round about your body, you may go securely into the fight.

“Now, notice what the different pieces of armour are, ‘*Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with Truth.*’ Men, when they prepare to run a race, to wrestle, or to fight, fasten a belt or kerchief tightly round their waist, which they feel to be a support and strength to that part of the frame where weakness first flies, where fatigue is first felt; so in our great life-fight, our great spiritual-fight, we have at all times to put on the girdle of truth, which will be help and strength to us.

“Next, you are to have on the ‘*breastplate of Righteousness,*’ so that when you receive a bayonet charge from the enemy, the point may glance harmlessly off, and not pierce to the heart. A soldier once

went into battle with a New Testament, the gift of his mother, in the bosom of his dress ; he fought bravely throughout the battle, and at night, by the camp fire, took out his Bible to read, when, to his surprise, a bullet fell from among the leaves, and on examination he found the shot had penetrated half through the book. The Testament had been as a breastplate to him, and was the means of saving his life. Put on the *breastplate of Righteousness,* it is both sword-proof and bullet-proof.

“The next thing with which you must equip yourselves is a *‘preparation of the Gospel of peace,’* with which you are to clad your feet. It will make them nimble and active, ever ready and willing to carry to others, who have been sore wounded in conflict, the message of glad tidings and peace, or swift to bring aid to those who are sore pressed by the enemy. You may have the girdle of truth, and the breastplate, yet, without your feet being shod with the *‘Gospel of peace,’* you may pass all your days fighting for yourselves, and never bestow a thought or care upon a poor fellow-soldier in distress.

“The Apostle says, *‘Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.’* You see he lays particular stress upon taking the shield ; that used to be a very important article in ancient warfare. He who was skilful in using it, could in an instant cover any part of his body which the foe threatened to assail. So, if

you carry about with you a good, strong, firm, and enduring faith, on which to receive all the blows of your wily enemy, it will save you from many a grievous wound.

“Next, you are to wear the ‘*helmet of Salvation*,’ which is to be a protection to the head, as sometimes your enemy aims at that exclusively, and it becomes absolutely necessary to have it strictly guarded. There is an Italian proverb which says, ‘*He that has a head of wax should not walk in the sun*,’ that is as much as to say, if the head is the weakest part of your body, be careful in shielding it from all danger, and this cannot be more effectually done than by wearing the helmet of salvation.

“Then you have to take the ‘*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*.’ You must use your Bible as a weapon of defence to ward off blows, and as a weapon of offence with which to give strong, lusty blows in return for those which you receive.

“If, when you set out in life to fight the great battle which all must fight, you go forth clothed with such armour as Paul describes, you will be well prepared to meet your foes, for whom you must ever keep on the watch, and be constant in your prayer for strength; for they are mighty and strong.

“A king of France, many hundred years ago, went out with his army to give battle to the enemy who had invaded his land; and he took with him his son, a little lad of twelve or thirteen years of age, to whom

he said, before the battle commenced, 'Keep close to my side and fear not, I will protect you.' Now, the battle went sore against the king. His army was defeated and fled, and all his gallant knights slain or in the hands of the enemy, while the king himself was surrounded by foes who sought to take him and his son prisoners. The boy, remembering what his father had said, kept close to his side, and whenever and wherever he saw a foe about to strike, he shouted, '*Father, strike right! Father, strike left! Father, strike front!*' And to whichever point the boy directed attention down came the battle-axe of the king, and a foe bit the dust.

"Now, that is how you boys should act. You have a Father, a King, able and willing to protect you. When your foes press round about you, and are too many for you, send up a swift and earnest prayer—'*Father, strike this!*' '*Father, strike that!*' and you will be master of the field. Fight the good fight, boys, and leave off school quarrels, which only disfigure your faces, and learn you to cherish bitter and uncharitable thoughts and feelings. *Fight the good fight!*"



CHAPTER VII.

OLD SUKEY PINPOLE, AND WHAT JAME
FELIX SAID ABOUT HEROES.

"There's many a tender heart beneath a wrinkled skin."

"The shell may be hard but the kernel sweet."

"A rash action is soon repented."

"A good deed is never lost."

"A good knight is never at a loss for a lance."

"Courage sometimes means endurance."

*"He who puts the armour on should not boast as him
who takes it off."*



CHAPTER VII.

OLD SUKEY PINPOLE, AND WHAT LAME FELIX
SAID ABOUT HEROES.

IN the upper room of a miserable, tumble-down-looking old house in a place called "Wright's Yard," lived Mrs Brown, a poor and lonely old widow woman, who seemed to be without a single friend in the world. She was not a pleasant old woman to look at, and usually went by the name of "Sukey Pinpole." With her wrinkled features, elf-looking grey locks, long red cloak, and thick walking-stick, she inspired more terror in the children than any other inhabitant of Braintree, not even excepting Savile, the policeman. She was called a witch, and taunted with having performed many an evil deed. And I have been told by those who lived in the room underneath that in which she resided, she was by no means a pleasant neighbour, being partial to making loud noises at most unseasonable hours,

and upsetting jugs of water at most inopportune times.

"It was no unusual thing," Mrs Lankester remarked (the tenant of the lower room), "to see a stream of water falling from the ceiling; and let me tell you, it is not pleasant by any means to have it fall into the sugar basin, or on to a dish of potatoes; yet it once fell into my Joe's basin of bread and milk, and into my Billy's plate of meat and potatoes."

Poor Sukey! She was a harmless creature after all, leading a very lonely and secluded life, supported by the parish, and the charity of her wealthier neighbours. Beneath her withered and wrinkled skin she carried a heart which was very human, and one that had known many sorrows; but her sorrows had not led her to seek sympathy of her neighbours round about. As some flowers, when touched by a rude hand, close, and retreat in upon themselves, so likewise her heart shut in her sorrow, and by no word did she let others know of its existence; she brooded over it alone.

When she first came to Braintree it was with her only son, a lad about sixteen years of age. All Sukey's earthly pleasure and hope seemed centred in her son. He was a bright, brave-looking boy, and returned his mother's love in every way he could express, while at the same time he worked hard for her support. It was a pleasant sight to see the poor widow leaning on her son's arm when he took her for an evening walk, or on the Sunday as they went to church. No one

dared to call his mother by any other name than her own within his hearing, for, respecting her himself, he was swift to punish all those who treated her disrespectfully.

But one unfortunate October fair day Sukey's son had been making merry with several companions and taken too much to drink, and while in that state had accepted the shilling from a recruiting sergeant, and enlisted for a soldier. The next day brought unavailing repentance and bitter remorse, while his mother's tears nearly drove him frantic. A moment's thoughtless action affects a whole lifetime. Before he went away he entreated *Lame Felix* to visit his mother sometimes, and read to her what letters he wrote.

It was some time before *Felix* could gain admittance to poor old *Sukey*. This last blow was heard to bear; she barred the door against all comers, and endured her sorrow in silence and alone. Yet *Felix* persevered, and by degrees won his way to the old woman's heart, and every week he made his way to her upper room.

One evening, about two years after young *Brown* had left England with his regiment, *Lame Felix* was seen making his way to old *Sukey's* with a large newspaper in his hand, and exhibiting unusual signs of excitement. Every one he passed turned round, wondering what made the old man peg away so fast, while the boys who were on their way to his cottage for their evening's talk and lounge, stopped short on

seeing him turn up "Wright's yard," waving his paper to them as he did so, shouting, "Glorious news! I'll be with you directly, boys!" In half-an-hour's time Felix was back again at his cottage, red with heat and exertion, and out of breath with the speed with which he had walked.

"Now then, boys," he began, as soon as he had somewhat recovered himself, "sit you down, bring yourselves to an anchor anywhere. Here's young Brown been and done a glorious action, and his old mother has been crying for joy while I read it—saved his captain's life, rescued him from the enemy almost at the expense of his own. •

"It appears his regiment was unexpectedly attacked by an overwhelming force of the enemy, and obliged to retreat, and while so doing the captain was missing; some one had seen him fall ere they began to retreat, but the field was now overrun by a ruthless and vindictive foe. When a halt was called for the night, Brown secretly left the camp and made his way back to where his captain had fallen, to rescue him if not dead, or bury his body if he were. When he reached the place where it was supposed he must have fell, he searched about for some little time before he could find him, but when he did, he was rejoiced to see the captain was still alive, though weak and faint from loss of blood. Carefully lifting him up in his arms, so that he partly rested on one shoulder, he began making his way back to the camp. •

"It was, as you may suppose, slow work, and he was compelled frequently to lay the captain down and rest himself, at the same time observing the utmost caution lest he should be surprised by the enemy. But at the very moment he thought himself safe, he unexpectedly encountered a group of the foe who were on the look-out to capture stragglers. He was immediately surrounded and commanded to yield; however, instead of doing this, he let the captain's body gently slide to the ground, while he laid about him right and left, with his captain's sword, and in such a manner as to astonish the enemy, whom he at length contrived to beat off, although at the expense of several wounds. He then again resumed his journey, but it was not until nearly exhausted that he gained the camp.

"There, boys! what say you to that? Does it not make your hearts glow? It is such deeds as these we love to recite, that boys may learn to sympathise with what is noble and heroic in life and action; and the boy whose heart and imagination are not fired by heroic deeds is not worthy of the name of boy.

"I have great faith in the influence of noble deeds; the lives of brave men are of inestimable value, being powerful agents in fostering noble thought and intention, and in giving additional impulse to those who have already determined to live a brave, manly life. Lives of self-sacrifice, lives devoted to the welfare of others, lives spent in promoting their country's glory,

or in accomplishing great undertakings, are never told in vain. Boys trace each upward step with eagerness, and often a glow of enthusiasm is kindled, while a yearning desire to accomplish similar achievements takes possession of the soul, and when it does it gives a colour to the early actions and dawning life of the boy, and, apart from the grace of God, does more than almost anything else to keep the nature pure and free from mean, sordid, and base motives.

“Read the lives of great men, boys; make yourselves familiar with noble deeds, and use them as shields to guard heart and brain. The proverb says, ‘*The deeds of good men live after death,*’ and so likewise the deeds of great men; indeed, one scarcely likes to separate goodness and courage, for the highest form of courage is goodness.

“Make yourselves familiar with noble lives, then will you become familiar with heroic deeds. When I was a boy I read ‘Plutarch’ under a hedge, and no book so fired my soul as did the perusal of that; those grand old heathen fellows seemed to pass before me clothed again in their wonted flesh, performed again their matchless deeds, and uttered once more their pungent and heart-stirring words. Did you ever read ‘Homer,’ the singer of heroic deeds? We are told that Alexander the Great slept with a copy of it under his pillow, so great was his admiration for the blind old poet.

“Soon after I was able to read I fell in with a

number of volumes of voyages and travels, recording the achievements of the bold mariners of Queen Elizabeth's day—Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher, Raleigh, and many others, who made the world echo with their names and their famous deeds, in that grand old time when our nation was in the glory and splendour of her heroic period.

“How my heart used to thrill as I read of the death of the noble Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and to this hour I can recall the very words in which the narrative is couched: ‘On Monday, the 9th of September, in the afternoon the frigate was nearly cast away, oppressed by waves, but at that time recovered, and gave forth signs of joy; the general, sitting abaft with a book in his hand, cried out unto us in the *Hinde*, so often as we did approach within hearing, “*We are as near to heaven by sea as by land*,” reiterating the same speech, well becoming a soldier resolute in Jesus Christ, as I can testify that he was. The same Monday night, about twelve of the clock, or not long after, the frigate being a-head of us in the *Golden Hinde*, suddenly her lights were out, whereof as it were in a moment we lost the sight; and withal our watch cried, “The general was cast away!” which was too true.’

“What brave words for a man to utter when death was so near, ‘*We are as near to heaven by sea as by land!*’ Could only every one realise the full force of those words, it would make many men more heroic than they are.

“ There was another grand old sea-lion whose dying words are like trumpet-calls, rousing all the energies of our nature to activity—Sir Richard Grenville. He had been fighting his ship all night against overpowering odds, but was at length obliged to surrender, and he himself carried in a dying condition on to the Spanish admiral’s vessel ; and, as he lay on deck, the captains of the fleet crowded round the expiring hero, who, feeling his end approaching, cried out in Spanish, ‘ Here die I, Richard Grenville, with a joyful and quiet mind, for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought to do, that hath fought for his country, Queen, religion, and honour. Wherefore my soul most joyfully departeth out of this body, and shall always leave behind it an everlasting fame of a valiant and true soldier that hath done his duty as he was bound to do.’ When he had finished these words, he gave up the ghost with great and stout courage. In such way do heroes die.

“ And what a number of heroes our England has produced ! What a time it would take merely to run over the names of them alone ! You all have read of the death of the noble and generous Sidney on the field of Zutphen, and how, while wounded and burning with thirst, he gave up his cup of water to a dying soldier, saying, here is one needs it more than I. Such deeds and such men make us proud to know and feel that we are Englishmen.

“ But there are other heroes than those that have

lived and died on battle-fields. And that is not the highest courage which exhibits itself on a battle-field ; it is difficult to be a coward in the midst of the noise and tumult of strife. When the blood pours madly through the veins, and every passion is in excitement, a man will fight then if he has the least spark of manhood in him. But there have come times in the lives of some men when they have had calmly and deliberately to choose between two paths, the one leading to wealth and worldly honour, and the other to death. That is the time to test courage. ‘ *Whoso looks undauntedly upon death is no coward,*’ says the proverb.

“The history of most countries, and the history of the Church in all ages, abound with instances of men who have done this, and not only men, but weak women too. Grand old Luther, the lion of Reformers, did it when he went to Worms ; Anne Askew did it when she disputed with the wily priests ; John Rogers did it and was burned at Smithfield ; that simple English maiden over there at Colchester, Rose Allen, did it, and was burned in the courtyard of the castle. In all times of persecution how numberless the instances in which men, women, and even children, have chosen death rather than life—in our own country when Queen Mary reigned ; in France, when the Huguenots were massacred ; in the Netherlands, when cruel Philip of Spain sentenced the inhabitants to death ; and in that country, and at that time, we

have a marvellous instance of this in a poor servant girl who had the courage to endure death rather than deny her Saviour.

“She would not renounce her faith, although her mistress had done so, and the Jesuits denounced her, and she was condemned to be buried alive. And one fine summer morning she was led into a hay-field outside of Brussels, where a pit was already dug for her, into which she descended, the earth being shovelled in after her, heaped upon her, and the executioner stamping on it all to make it firm. Where can you find truer heroism than that?

“All history, I say again, is full of noble examples of heroism and true courage. Indeed, you boys have but to read your Bibles, and you will find it a book of heroes and heroism. There we have the record of the greatest act of heroism ever performed. Heroes! why, the sacred pages teem with them. Think of King David in battle, with the war-spirit on him; think of his mighty captains, and of those who fought their way through the hosts of the enemy to procure him some of the water from the well outside by the gates of Jerusalem. Picture to yourselves Daniel praying, with his window open, and his face turned towards the Holy City; and the three young men who were cast into the fiery furnace. Then there is Isaiah in his dungeon, and the brave slave who procured his relief. And when you come to the New Testament, think what the apostles endured and

suffered, and then tell me whether the Bible is not a book of heroes?

"I am sadly afraid boys do not read their Bibles enough in this age. They think it dull and uninteresting, whereas it is the most interesting book in the whole world, and is as suitable for youth as it is for old age. Read your Bibles !

"But perhaps you boys may never have your courage so strongly tested as in many of the instances I have mentioned. This is not an age of martyrdom ; I sometimes like to think of it as an age of worry, in which people fret their life away, because they cannot endure petty trials and troubles. There is as much courage and heroism in quietly enduring as there is in active fighting ; nay, I sometimes think more, for in action you have something for eyes, head, and hands to do, but in enduring you have to sit and patiently wait ; there are few who do this—it is a method of fighting to which most people object. But God can be served in that way as truly as in any other. '*They also serve who only stand and wait,*' says the poet. The prayer should constantly go up to heaven, 'Lord, give me the power of patiently enduring ; give me the power to wait !'

"You, boys, who will soon have to go out into the world, if you are Christians, and I hope you are, will have much to endure—slander, contumely, ridicule, scorn, and contempt. This you ought patiently to endure for your Saviour's sake ; it is a grand way of

fighting, and remember, '*Only they that fight are crowned.*' You have a grand example ever before you of One '*Who when He was reviled, reviled not again.*'

"I remember a lad, on board a ship I once served in—who I think was the only Christian among the crew—who during a long voyage out and home was the butt and target for all his messmates' wit, ridicule, and laughter. He must have been a good lad, for he endured it all bravely and calmly, never returning an angry word, although I doubt not sorely tried and tempted to do so. This meekness made many call him coward—for there are men in the world who can't distinguish moral courage when they see it manifested,—this was the hardest trial the lad had to bear, and one day I found him between decks crying. I asked him how it was he bore all so patiently, and he replied, '*How can I be a coward to my Saviour when He was so brave for me?*'

"One day one of the boy's most cruel tormentors fell from the mast into the sea, and was in danger of being drowned, for he could not swim. The lad, seeing the man must perish if help did not speedily reach him, sprang from the vessel, and, swimming to him, held him up until a boat could be lowered to their assistance. I shall never forget the expression which flushed into the lad's face as he stepped on board, and, looking round, said, '*Am I a coward now?*' Patient endurance is sometimes a proof of

highest courage. Learn to endure, boys ; learn to endure !

“Years and years ago now, when England was young among nations, knights used to encase themselves in armour, mount their war-horses, and, spear in hand, go forth through the land, to succour those who were in distress, to redress the wrongs of those who were cruelly oppressed, and to fight for truth. Many were the adventures which these knights encountered, many the dangers and perils they endured, and many the hardships and grievous wounds they suffered ; some never again returned, dying valiantly while fighting against error and wrong ; for sometimes wrong seems more powerful than right. The Hindoos have a true proverb, which says, ‘*Truth will conquer, but falsehood will kill,*’ and error is a mighty giant who has slain many victims. It was not the knight who came back with polished armour and unnotched sword who slayed error and wrong ; but he who returned with rusted and dented armour, and notched and blunted sword.

“It would not exactly do in our age to mount a horse and go forth in search of adventures, or run a tilt against wrong with a lance ; but each boy who commences the real, earnest business of life, can do a knight’s work in another, but not less practical, way. There is a possibility for each boy making himself a hero ; wrong, aggression, and error are as prevalent now as ever they were, and every one ought,

and should determine to do his best to help drive them out of the land.

“It is a favourite theory of mine that everybody ought to leave the world a little better than it was when they found it, and so be helpers of God. I think almost everybody have it in their power to do something. A proverb says, ‘*A good knight is never at a loss for a lance,*’ and every individual who earnestly desires to do something for his suffering fellow-creatures, will never be at a loss what to do; given a willing spirit and active hands, the work will be found waiting.

“Many men seem afraid to put their hand to a piece of work that requires doing; they have it in their power to remedy a wrong, to alleviate suffering, to help those in distress, but they never do it. If talking would do it, it would be speedily done, for all their effort expends itself in words. Proverbs abound which illustrate these kind of doers. There is a very homely one which says, ‘*Barking dogs don’t bite; and talking men don’t fight;*’ and another—‘*The worse wheel is that which creaks;*’ while the Persian proverb reads, ‘*The horse that is ever bounding makes a short journey long; the man that is ever vaunting performeth little.*’ ‘*Silent tongue but speaking deeds,*’ should be the rule.

“Be heroes for your God, boys; His Son became a hero for you. Never flinch from doing what is right because of the consequences; do your little piece of

work manfully and bravely, and let the world talk as it may. There was never anything done yet but some one objected to the doing. Indeed, there are plenty of people who are too cowardly to act themselves, but always stand by ready to throw cold water on those that do. Never mind that; '*Offences will come, but woe unto them by whom they come.*' What signifies what men say if you win the smile and approval of God?"



CHAPTER VIII.

OLD BOBTAIL.

" Opportunity is the cream of time."

" Opportunities neglected are lost."

*" He that will not when he may, when he will shall
have nay."*

" To him that will ways are not wanting."

" Strike while the iron is hot."

" Where there is a will there is a way."



CHAPTER VIII.

OLD BOBTAIL.

BELIEVE, boys," said Lane Felix, one evening, "that there comes an opportunity in every life for doing something good or great. Sometimes the opportunity is seized—more often it slips by, and is lost for ever. Some men make their own opportunity, others sit quietly waiting for theirs, and cannot use it when it comes; others, again, can see it, but turn from it with disdain, because the deed they can perform appears too insignificant; but, generally speaking, most men complain that they never have an opportunity for doing anything good or great. I say the opportunity comes to every life if men will but open their eyes and see it, stretch out their hands and seize it; and everybody ought to do this, for no life should end in *self*, but, on the contrary, branch out for others.

"It is a law in nature that nothing lives for itself; .

the flower sucks moisture and support from the black earth, the rain, and the air, but returns it again in beautiful colour and fragrance for man's use and delight. This same law should regulate human life ; all men receive sustenance and support from the Lord of all, and should let it reascend in expressions of love and gratitude ; and the highest expression of gratitude consists in doing good to others. The proverb says, '*All sparks fly upward, and all good deeds take the same path.*'

"I believe no one is so humble or insignificant—be it man or woman, boy or girl—but that the tongue may say a kind word, the eye beam with friendly light, and the hand perform a kindly deed, and, apart from all that, may once in a lifetime do something memorable, even as old Bobtail did. What ! I never told you about old Bobtail ? Well, listen, and I'll tell you who he was, what he did, and how he died.

"Bobtail lived here, in Braintree, long before either of you boys were born. No one knew who he was, yet he was as well known as the town-pump which stands at the corner of High Street and Bank Street. He appeared to be a regular institution of the town, and was recognised as such. No one seemed to know where he came from, or how long he had resided in Braintree. Many and many a time did I inquire who Bobtail was, and the only answer I ever received was, 'Why, lawks-a-daisy ! Master Felix, not know who Bobtail is ! Why, Bobtail, to be sure !' And that

was all the information I could ever gain. It was difficult to tell his exact age, for he never appeared to have been young, and he never seemed to get old: life with him remained stationary.

“Bobtail was not his real name, but a nickname he had acquired from his peculiar manner of walking, and the long coats he wore. He had a kind of ‘springy motion in his gait,’ which made the lappets of his coat go bob, bob, bob—hence the name, Bobtail. He was never known to have a coat which fitted him. Any cast-off garment which fell to his share in the way of charity, he appropriated for his own private use, until want of money compelled him to part with it to some second-hand dealer, or at the rag-shop. Sometimes he might be seen about the streets in a great-coat with an immense high collar, such as you may still occasionally see in villages and country churches—coats which appear to have been in a family for generations, and descended from father to son as a family heir-loom. At other times, he was seen shining resplendent among his companions in all the finery of a swallow-tail dress-coat; but no matter what garment it was, how old or how new—bob, bob, bob, went the tail.

“Bobtail’s life was not a desirable one to imitate or lead; he was an idle, lazy fellow, too good-natured to do anybody a wilful injury or himself any service; he had committed one or two petty thefts, and spent a few months in gaol as the consequence; but after

his second imprisonment, he was heard to say that it should be the last time he would ever see the inside of a prison. He loved his ease, and the sunshine, and the free air too much, and for the future would keep his hands from picking and stealing. He had found out by experience the truthfulness of what our old Bible asserts, '*That the way of transgressors is hard.*' My only surprise now is, that he was ever outside a prison wall—for, having no home, he passed his nights wherever he found a convenient place or a sheltered nook, sometimes under a hedge or in a ditch, sometimes in a shed ; or, when flush with money, indulging in the luxury of a fourpenny bed. This, however, was not very frequently the case.

"To be without a home now is a crime, and all persons found sleeping in the open air are sent to prison to enjoy a month of hard labour. Whether magistrates are more harsh now than they were when Bobtail roamed the country, I cannot say ; but this I know, if he were still in existence, most of his days would be spent in the county gaol. We all ought to treat poverty with mildness, for poverty in itself is a punishment which requires no adding to. Bobtail was poor, lazy, and good-natured, and although many shook their heads in reprobation of his good-for-nothing life, the head-shaking was always accompanied by a smile.

"Bobtail was an impudent beggar. Whenever his stomach told him it was near dinner-time or tea-time,

he would march into a baker's-shop, and ask for a piece of stale bread, and when that was obtained would find his way to Porter's, the cheesemonger, and beg for a piece of cheese or a dab of butter. It was seldom he solicited in vain, for most of Porter's young men were fond of indulging in practical jokes at his expense, which they paid for by giving him old clothes, boots, and dry pieces of cheese, or a paper of butter scrapings.

"Bobtail was patronised by most of the Braintree boys, for he was one of the best hands at manufacturing fishing-tackle, making flies, or procuring live bait; he knew, too, which were the most likely places to cast the fly, the particular part of the stream where the largest-sized fish were to be caught, and was always willing to spend the day in an angling excursion, provided you gave him a liberal share of the contents of your basket. No one was so successful in bird nesting as Bobtail. He knew the likeliest places for miles round where the nightingale, the turtle-dove, the woodpecker, or the owl were to be found. Many and many a day have I spent with Bobtail among the green fields, or on the banks of some pleasant stream.

"Poor old Bobtail! As I recall him to mind I cannot help pitying him. His was a useless life. He seemed an encumberer of the ground, a tree that bore no fruit, a fruitless vine—one who let the time pass by and never turned it to good account. Life is a real thing, and not to be spent in idleness, not to be

wasted as though it were of no account, scattered to the winds as we scatter chaff. But such was Bobtail, and such was his life, and no one in Braintree ever thought he was the man capable of doing something noble and brave ; yet the opportunity came, and he seized it. I'll tell you what it was he did.

“Down the Coggershall road were a number of almshouses for the use of poor widows, and many with whom life had gone roughly, and who in their old age were left alone and destitute, found there a comfortable asylum in which to spend their days until they left for the quiet and rest of the grave.

“About the time of which I speak, there had been a great number of fires round about our town, and also in different parts of the country. Farmer after farmer in the night awoke startled to find his stacks on fire, and stables and barns in flames. There was much distress throughout the land, and some people appeared to think that the best way to remedy this was to burn all the corn and destroy all the property they could. This being the state of things, it was no unusual circumstance to be aroused by the intelligence that So-and-so's place was on fire.

“I had gone one evening to church with my mother—she always took me, dear soul, although I fear I was a sad boy—and tried as well as I could to listen and understand the service ; but the minister appeared to me to be very long, for the shadows of twilight were stealing in at the windows and door,

darkening the church, so that his form was scarcely discernible in the dusky light.

"Suddenly, some one thrust their head in at the door, shouting—

"*'Fire! Fire!'*

"Immediately afterwards another voice was heard, exclaiming, '*The Widows' Almshouses are on fire!*'

"You may conceive how startling was the news, how instantly the quiet church was in a state of confusion, people getting up and hastily leaving, the pew doors shutting with a bang, and women whispering to each other. The minister stopped short in his discourse, saying—'In God's name go, my good people, and give what help you can;' and hastily pulling off his gown, he descended the pulpit stairs, and hurrying from the church, was soon actively engaged at the scene of disaster.

"Leaving with the rest of the people, I and my mother sped quickly along High Street, Bank Street, and, turning down by the White Hart Inn—in which direction all Braintree seemed streaming—speedily found ourselves gazing at the scene of conflagration.

"It was a terrible sight to witness; the timber, of which the houses were chiefly composed, was old and dry, while the thatch was like so much tinder, so that the flames curled and twisted themselves, and ran along the roofs like fiery-tongued serpents. Now the faces of the surrounding crowd were brilliantly illuminated as the flames and sparks shot upwards; then

again they were obscured and blackened, as the wind drove great clouds of smoke in their direction. Dusky forms could be seen darting in and out of the doomed houses, pieces of furniture were strewn all over the road, the clang, clang, of the engines' was heard, and the hissing of the water as it fell on the flames; the people shouted, and above all might be heard the occasional cry or lamentation of some of the poor widows as they were hurried from their burning homes.

"Presently the engines ceased pumping, no more forms were seen to enter the houses; the flames had acquired the mastery, it was useless labour to throw more water on them, and dangerous to enter a house, for rafters, chimneys, and many pieces of burning thatch were constantly falling. The crowd became silent, waiting for the end.

"Suddenly a shrill, piercing scream was heard, evidently proceeding from one of the fated houses. An expression of horror mantled over the faces, and looked out from the eyes of the crowd as they shone in the lurid glare; while the conviction flashed like lightning into each mind that some poor, feeble woman had been overlooked in the hurry, and was now apparently doomed to a most frightful death.

"'Who is it?' 'Who can it be?' passed quickly from mouth to mouth. No one seemed able to answer, until a solitary voice was heard to exclaim, '*It's bedridden Betsey Pinfold.*' How could she be

saved? Who would venture into such a mass of burning flames? It seemed certain death to attempt it.

“ ‘*Will no one try to reach the poor creature?*’ This was the minister who spoke.

“For a moment or two all were silent; then a voice was heard to exclaim, ‘*Here, I will.*’

“Who is it? Every neck was stretched to catch a glimpse of the brave volunteer.

“ ‘*Why, it’s Bobtail!*’

“ ‘*Bravo! Bravo! Bobtail!*’

“ ‘*Bobtail’s the man!*’

“ ‘Now, then, a ladder,’ cried Bobtail. A ladder! Yes, a score if you want them, Bobtail, brave old Bobtail! One was soon procured from Butcher’s, the baker, and planted against the wall of the fast burning house, from the upper window of which clouds of smoke issued, and fierce jets of flame. Up the ladder sprang Bobtail, amid the encouraging ‘bravos!’ of the crowd, his shaggy hair stirred by the hot breath of the flames. The ladder was a little too short! Would he be able to reach the window-sill? Yes, see, there he hangs! He draws himself up. Now his knees are on the sill. He jumps in. A cloud of smoke and sparks hide him from sight.

“A breathless silence seizes the crowd. All eyes are anxiously fixed upon the window through which Bobtail vanished. Will he be successful? Will he be in time? How long he seems. Ah! there he is,

brave Bobtail. How black his face! How singed his hair! He has again disappeared! It was only for a breath of fresh air he came. He is absent longer this time. It seems hours. Has the smoke overpowered him? Is he dying, a martyr to his bravery? No, thank God, no. See, there he is again, and carrying something in his arms too! Can it be old Betsey? Why, it looks nothing but a bundle tied up in a blanket. How madly the crowd cheers! It must be Betsey. Brave old Bobtail! Yes, that's right; lower her down quickly, Bobtail, eager hands are held up from below to receive her, and the flames are roaring fiercely round, at your back, and in your hair. Safe at last, poor old Betty, more frightened than hurt.

"Now then, Bobtail, or the roof will be in upon you! Poor fellow! He gasps for breath. How slowly he mounts on to the sill—the flames lick his face while his feet are feeling for the ladder. Ah! now he gains it, and speedily sliding down to the ground, falls back faint and unconscious. Not a moment too soon, for as eager hands bear him, amid deafening cheers, to a place of safety, the walls fall crashing to the ground, and in a little while nothing but a heap of blackened and smouldering ruins remained of the homes of sixteen poor women.

"Never was a fellow so fêted and feasted as was Bobtail after rescuing the poor widow. He might have done nothing else but eat and drink from morn-

ing to night, did he but possess the power, which he was sorry to find he did not. Every household welcomed him, and set before him their best. His boon companions, the beggars, the tramps, and the thieves, chaired him, carrying him round the town in triumph, while a little man beat a big drum, and one tall man played the cornet, another the triangle, and a woman the tambourine; never was seen such a procession, or such shouting heard before, as upon this occasion, which ended in the pig market in a glorious bonfire and unlimited supplies of beer from the '*Orange-tree*.'

"This achievement of Bobtail's was long remembered in Braintree; and, as I say, boys, proves that, however humble an individual may be, the opportunity comes to one and all in which something good may be accomplished, or something memorable be achieved; no opportunity ought to be allowed to slip by, however insignificant or unimportant it may seem; it comes but to few to do great things, but it comes to all to do good and kind things, and to do these helps to keep the heart young and fresh, and to kindle an undying flame of love in the soul—a flame which not only warms our own nature, but sheds warmth and light into the soul of others; and whatever you do for the good of your fellow-creatures, love will help lighten the labour, for a proverb says, '*Love knows not labour*;' and another, '*Love makes labour light*;' while a third runs, '*Love warms more than a hundred fires*.'"

"Poor old Bobtail did not alter his mode of life ; he was still the same lazy, indolent, do-nothing kind of creature as ever ; the respect his brave action kindled in the hearts of his fellow-townsmen, did not create in his own mind respect for himself ; he still lounged at street-corners basking in the sun, or tossed with the pieman, or went fishing with the boys.

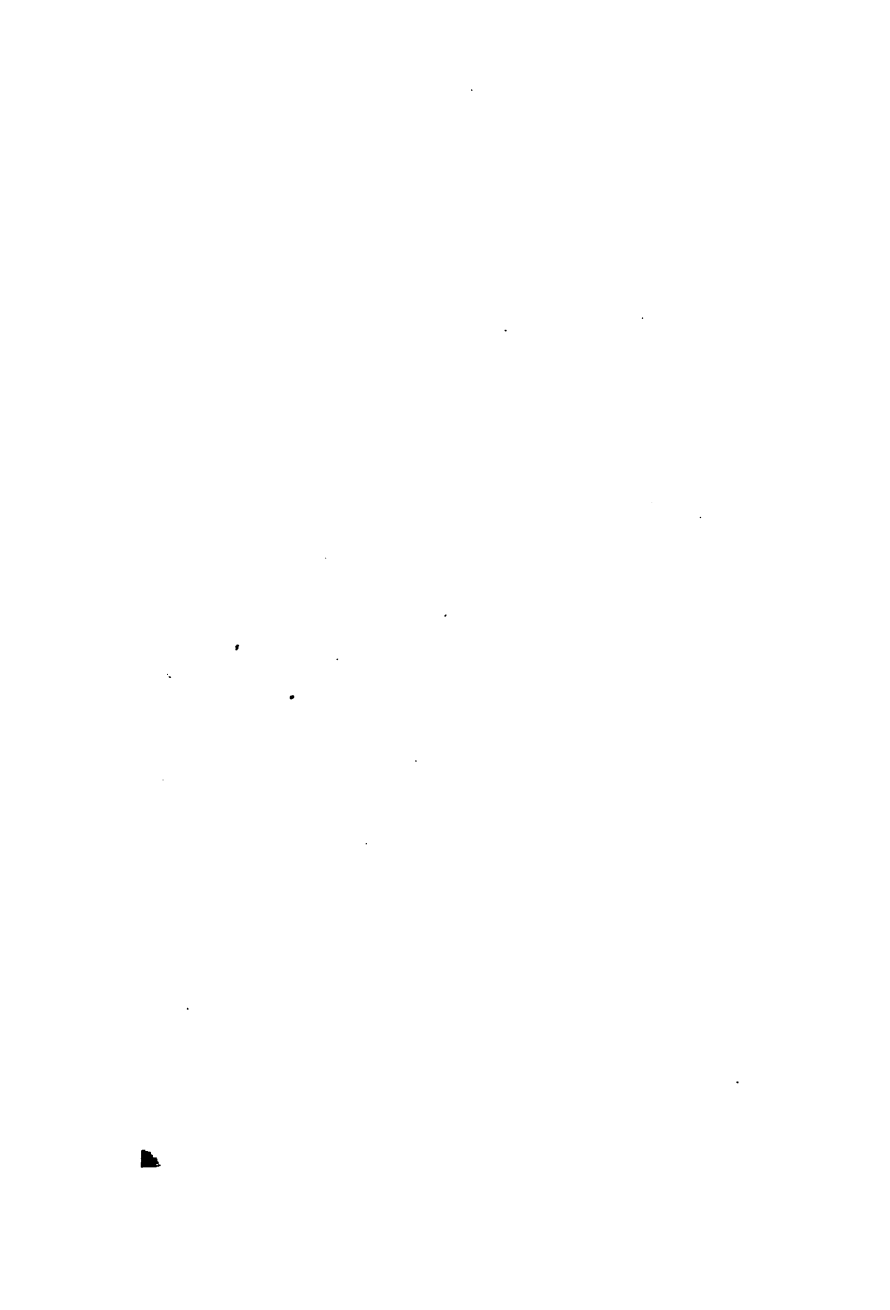
"About two winters after the fire, he caught a violent cold, which settled on his lungs, ending in galloping consumption. He was taken from the old shed into which he had crawled to die, and conveyed to the workhouse. I frequently went to see him, and was with him when he died. Poor fellow ! he was always glad to see me, and on the day he died, he told me he had been planning some pleasant fishing excursions for the ensuing summer, and while he was yet talking about them, he was seized with a severe fit of coughing, during which he ruptured a blood-vessel, and bled to death in a very little time.

"His old companions and mates followed him to the grave—men and women, boys and girls, all followed ; not one in black, but, on the contrary, mostly in rags. When the coffin was lowered into the grave, the motley company of mourners surrounded it, and each threw in a few halfpence, saying, 'There, Bobtail, there's something for you to begin to pitch and toss with when you reach the other side.' It was their way of expressing sorrow at his loss ; we ought not to sneer at it, or call the action by hard names ;

it was genuine, although singular; they knew no better way of testifying their estimate of his loss or worth.

“Boys, I have told you this that you may, one and all, do something worth doing once, at least, in your lifetime! never let it be said that so ignorant a creature as old Bobtail was able to do something, and you nothing. If such a homeless, hungry object was able to accomplish what he did, how much more ought you, who have homes where you are educated, cared for, and loved. Remember what our great Teacher has said, “*If but a cup of cold water is offered in My name, it shall meet its reward.*”





CHAPTER IX.

WHAT JAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING
LITTLE THINGS.

"Despise not a small wound."

"Every little helps, said the pig, when it snapped at a gnat."

"The whole of the ocean is made up of single drops."

"Drop by drop fills the tub."

"The longest life is but a parcel of moments."

"Gold is more frequently found in grains than in lumps."

"Great businesses turn on a little pin."



CHAPTER IX.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING LITTLE THINGS.

LAME FELIX was always ready with a proverb or parable to prove the importance of trifles. He never liked to hear little things despised or spoken of contemptuously. He seemed to have well pondered the Bible injunction, "*Despise not the day of small things,*" and invariably asserted that great events sprang from little causes, that small beginnings made great endings, and that although one grain of corn did not make a sackful, it helped ; that the sand of the sea-shore was made up by particles, and the ocean of drops of water.

I well remember one of his discourses or chats upon the value of little things. One of my school-fellows, Joe Clark, had accidentally scratched his hand with a rusty nail. The wound was but a slight one, and, boy-like, he took no heed, thinking it would speedily heal, like a great many previous scratches

had done. This time, however, instead of healing, it festered and became inflamed, and gradually the hand grew worse and worse, the inflammation extending along the arm to the shoulder, until he was compelled to carry it in a sling; several months elapsed before it became well, during all which time poor Joe was in the dumps, because he was unable to engage in his usual sports and pastimes, and only follow the surgeon's advice. I called one evening to see how he was getting on, and to try and cheer him up a little, when I found him lying on the sofa looking the very picture of discontent.

He brightened up a bit when he saw me, greeting me with, "Hallo, Harry, is that you? Well, you are a trump! I thought you were away at the cricket match."

"How is the hand, eh?"

"Oh! getting on, but precious slow; I'm bored to death here. A fellow might just as well be in prison. I can't think why the doctor don't give me some draught, so that I might sleep all the time the hand remained bad; but no, not he! he prates some stuff about assisting nature, and nature wouldn't be assisted if I slept so long. For my part I don't see any reason why she should not. Well, what shall we do now you've come? I'm tired, I can tell you. I've teased the cat till her tail is as thick round as my leg. Why don't I read? That's all very well; but a fellow gets enough of that at school. Besides, where is the

pleasure in lying on your back all day, with a book in your hand, like a dying duck with a leaf in its claw? Catch me doing it. What, go down to Lame Felix? Well, I don't mind if I do. It will be a change, anyhow, and he always has something lively to say. Come along."

So away we went, and found the old man seated outside his cottage door, enjoying his evening pipe. He gave us a cheery welcome, and inquired whether the hand was progressing.

"Ah! my boy," he continued, "you did not anticipate such a result from so small a cause; but great results often spring from trifling causes. '*Small wounds, if many, may be mortal.*' 'Poor Richard' says—'*A little leak will sink a great ship,*'—a truth no one can gainsay who knows anything about ships, and least of all myself, for I've known many a brave ship, with precious cargo, and more precious lives, lost from a little leak.

"It shows us how careful we ought to be over little things. Foolish men despise them, wise men know their value. When I was over in India I heard a Hindoo proverb, which runs—'*Little things should not be despised; many straws united may bind an elephant.*'" And there is another I have heard somewhere, but where I cannot say now: '*The greatest things are done by the help of small ones;* and we have a well-known English one—'*The greatest oaks have been little acorns.*'

“One day a rook picked an acorn from the branch of an oak, and in flying across a field to its nest, dropped it; where it fell it buried itself in the black earth. The earth and the snow kept it warm during the cold winter, and when spring came, with its warm sunshine and gentle showers, the acorn began to be troubled, it swelled and expanded, and presently a little stem shot from its centre, and, struggling upward, burst into the light and air.

“As time went on, the stem grew both in height and bulk, and shot out branches and leaves. Very often fierce storms of wind blew against it, but that only made it shoot its roots farther and firmer into the earth; the cold nipped it, the hail and frost beat upon it, but in spite of all it grew; and though great hard boles, and crooked and cross-grained branches, characterised it, it still became a mighty tree; and when centuries had passed over it, its huge branches stretched far and wide, while its trunk was so bulky that two or three boys joining hands together could not have clasped it round. So thick were the leaves on every twig, that it might have been the oak amidst whose branches King Charles hid when the Parliament troops pursued him. Be that as it may, through long bright summer days, and cool summer evenings, young men and young women held pic-nics beneath its branches, when many leaves were plucked and twisted into wreaths to adorn the brows of the one dearly loved; the cattle huddled for shelter beneath

the boughs in stormy weather, and on quiet Sabbath evenings crowds assembled there to hear a preacher who discoursed about the mighty cedars of Lebanon. The tree became famous.

“But one day men assembled, with hatchets, and saws, and ropes, to cut it down, and after many hours’ labour it fell with a mighty crash to the earth; its branches were lopped off and carried away for fuel, but its trunk was hoisted on to a timber carriage, and conveyed to a famous shipbuilder’s yard, where it was sawn into planks, and the planks fashioned into a ship. When the ship was finished, launched, and fully rigged, the crew went on board, and, after the crew a band of noble-hearted and devoted missionaries. And one bright morning she sailed out of harbour, and away to distant seas to carry the glad news of the Gospel of peace to the dark places of the earth, and to the habitations of cruelty.

“Despise not small things, for they make up the sum of life, as moments make minutes, minutes hours, hours days, days weeks, and weeks months and years. I often think that a little circumstance is more often the turning point in a character and a life than a great one. God seems to mould our lives from trifles; hence no incident, however trivial it may seem, is unimportant in His sight, and if not in His it ought not to be in ours. A little thing may work great good, or tremendous evil, according as it is used or despised.

“A little word spoken in season sometimes works

a great change in a life. An old Christian woman went to Whitfield's Tabernacle one Sunday morning; while walking along she touched a lad upon the shoulder, and invited him to go likewise. The lad went, and from that day devoted himself to the service of Christ, and in a few years became one of His most noble soldiers, carrying the glad news of his Master to the many islands in the vast Pacific; and there he met a martyr's death. His name was John Williams. Little did that poor old woman think that her word of invitation would be blessed by the Almighty to the consummation of so much good; but so it is, a word spoken from the heart never returns without doing something.

"Little things, trifles, develop and exhibit character. You know that Columbus based his theory of the existence of another continent across the waters of the Western sea, from observing floating seaweed, bits of wood, and such like trifles. Thousands of other eyes had perhaps seen similar things, but no notice was taken of them. He saw, and thought, and reasoned, and discovered America. Great men have always been noted for the value they set upon trifles. Sir Isaac Newton blew bubbles, and was laughed at for so doing; but those who laughed at seeing the grave man thus employed, did not know he was studying the laws and principles of colour.

"You know the story of the poor lad who walked to Paris, and applied at a great banker's for a situa-

tion, but was told there was no vacant place. Turning away, greatly disappointed, he stooped down and picked up a pin. 'If he is so careful over trifles,' said the banker, who was watching him, 'he will be careful over things of more value,' and calling him back he engaged his services. In after years the poor young man became the greatest banker in Paris. All because he stooped to pick up a pin which others had passed by in disdain. Value trifles !

"Talking of pins reminds me of something I once saw in a jeweller's shop in Paris, which is also an illustration of the value of small things. Looking in the window of a large jewellery establishment in the Rue de la Paix, an extraordinary bracelet attracted my attention. It was very splendid, yet very odd. It consisted of four rusty, bent, and battered pins, enclosed in a kind of framework, arranged so as to expose them with perfect distinctness, and surrounded by the most brilliant and precious gems. I wondered what they could mean, and thought there must be some history attached to them ; in thus thinking I was not mistaken, for I afterwards learned that, years before, a young gentleman was engaged to be married to a beautiful young lady ; but on the evening when the ceremony was to be performed, and while on his way to his intended's house, he stumbled and fell, somewhere near the Palais Royal, in a street then undergoing extensive repairs. In his anger he uttered some exclamation against the superintendent of the

streets, for which he was arrested and imprisoned in a dark, damp dungeon, and condemned to solitary confinement.

"Days, weeks, and months rolled on, and still he continued in silence and darkness a solitary prisoner. He felt that his body was becoming enfeebled, and his mind losing its power. He was afraid he should become mad if he could devise no means to awaken himself from this dreadful condition, and relieve the tediousness of his confinement.

"When taken prisoner everything of value had been taken from him ; nothing but four pins had escaped his gaolers' notice. These inspired him with a means of recreation which he thought would prevent mental decay. The poor prisoner occupied himself during two years of solitary confinement, in throwing the four pins at hazard about his cell, and then in searching for them, to recommence the same feat over again. This was his only pastime, but it served to keep him alive until again restored to liberty, when he told his touching story, and showed the four pins. It was his daughter who caused them to be set in jewellery. What think you of that, boys? Don't say again, trifles are of no value.

"To know of how much value trifles may become, you should be a shipwrecked sailor. Then it is that a half-bladed knife, a rusty piece of iron, a nail, all assume an importance they had never before received. In such circumstances, too, think how valuable a drop

of water becomes! I myself have been days in an open boat, tossed about on the broad ocean without one single drop of water passing my lips, when, with parched mouth and swollen throat, death seemed only a welcome relief. Then might be fully realised the truthfulness of the poet's description :

“ ‘ Water, water everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink ;
Water, water everywhere,
But not a drop to drink.’

Those who read of the perils and hardships of poor shipwrecked sailors, know that sometimes the neck of a bottle, filled with water, has to serve a man for twenty-four hours, while a single biscuit has been known to be the only food to satisfy the hunger of twelve men for the same space of time. Of how much importance a single drop, or a crumb, more or less, must have appeared in the eyes of such poor famishing wretches !

“ What valuable lessons may be learned from small things, from insects even. You all know the story of King Robert Bruce, who, when once forced to take shelter in a ruined building from the pursuit of his enemies, and while in a terribly despondent frame of mind, saw a spider climbing up the beam of the roof. The spider fell to the ground, but immediately tried again, when it a second time fell to the ground. It made a third attempt, but with a like result. Twelve

152 *THE ANT AND THE GRAIN OF CORN.*

times did the little spider try to climb up the beam, and twelve times did it fail to achieve the feat. But the thirteenth time it succeeded. The king rose up from his resting-place, and said, 'This little spider has taught me perseverance. I will follow its example. Twelve times have I been beaten by the enemy ; I will try once more.' He did so, and won the next battle.

"There is another warrior of whom I have read, who, like King Robert, was obliged to hide himself in a ruined building from his enemies. And, wishing to divert his mind from his hopeless condition, fixed his eyes upon an ant which was carrying a grain of corn, larger than itself, up a high wall. He numbered the efforts it made to accomplish this object. The grain fell *sixty-nine* times to the ground ; but the insect persevered, and the seventieth time it reached the top. This sight for the moment gave the warrior courage, and he never forgot the lesson : '*Little things teach great lessons.*'

"Never despise trifles, I again repeat ; they make the sum of life, and the sum of all our happiness. Happiness consists in little things—a kind look, a cheerful word, a warm pressure of the hand, a simple act of courtesy. It is because we do not yield to each other in little things life is made miserable, character is misunderstood, minds are disturbed, and hearts made sorrowful ; it is just because they are little things, and we think they are of no moment, that we



'Another warrior of whom I have read fixed his eyes upon an ant which was carrying a grain of corn larger than itself up a high wall.'—LAME FELIX, page 152.

do not yield ; not because we are worse than other people, but we do not consider that pleasure or pain depends upon a trifle. It is the same with little faults, of which the proverb says, '*Small faults indulged in, are little thieves that let in greater.*'

"It is little sorrows, little cares, and little disappointments that wear and fret the heart away, and plough the face with wrinkles. Great sorrows come but seldom in a lifetime ; occasionally they do unhinge a character for life ; but usually great sorrows have a softening and mellowing influence upon it, but little petty cares and griefs seldom, if ever. To be anxious about many things is bad.

"I should like you boys here to be able to weigh and value little things, not despise them ; it is little moments and minutes which are carrying you on to eternity ; you think, because you have all life lying before you, you have time for everything, and therefore take no heed of the moments as they fly. Men who are well up in years estimate their value aright, and know and feel how precious they are. Waste not your time ; by rightly economising it, you may live seven years in six—or, on the contrary, by wasting it you may live five instead. '*Time wasted is never regained,*' says the proverb ; '*The young are prodigal of time,*' says another ; and a third, '*He who sows the golden sands of time broadcast, will reap a plentiful crop of regret.*'

"A great Frenchman wrote a book during the time

he was compelled to wait each day for his wife to make her appearance at the dinner-table. Sir John Herschel, while playing in the band at Bath, and fulfilling his various other engagements, found time to pursue his astronomical studies. While his companions spent their spare moments in the public-house, he hurried to his laboratory or study, and made golden use of the minutes. Be careful of your minutes, boys; in the end you will find of how much value they have been.

“Value little things! Beware of little sins, they are the ruination of character, life, and soul. A little sin seems of no moment, no more does a single link of a chain, but a number of links welded together makes the chain; and a number of little sins makes a chain strong enough to hold the soul in bondage. To a really wise mind nothing is a trifle. Take heed, boys, and always bear in mind the caution of our great chart and guide-book—‘*Despise not the day of small things.*’

“A great poet was once asked to write a few lines in a little girl’s album, or manuscript book, and he wrote the following :

“Small service is true service while it lasts ;
Of friends, however humble, scorn not one ;
The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.”

Pretty, simple lines, but how much they express. A daisy can protect a dewdrop; and what may not a boy do !”

CHAPTER X.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID ABOUT BOOKS.

" A blessing is a blessing in whatever guise it comes."

" A good book, a good friend."

" Knowledge is no burden."

" He is a great necromancer, for he asks counsel of the dead, i.e., books."

" Years know more than books."

" The worst of a bad book is, it cannot repent."



CHAPTER X.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID ABOUT BOOKS.

“**H**ALLO! there; hallo! What are you doing to that book? I am sure that is not the way in which a book should be treated. What harm has it done that you should kick it about? Books are great blessings, and he who ill-treats a blessing does not deserve to have one.”

Such was the outcry from Lame Felix, as, leaning over his garden gate one evening, he saw a group of boys busily engaged in, the not very laudable occupation, of kicking a volume about the road. Whether it was a Latin Delectus or a Euclid, over the contents of which the boys had been puzzling their brains, and which almost all boys look upon as their natural enemies—and were indulging in this mode of procedure as a kind of vent for their pent-up feelings of disgust, I know not; but certain it was, the book was

being desecrated by dust and kicks, until it presented a very miserable appearance indeed.

“Come, come, lads! I don’t like to see a book ill-used; they are not written, and printed, and bound, or bought for that purpose. Come inside a little while, and let us have a palaver, as the Indians say, about the matter. As I said before, books are great blessings, and should be treated as such; but in this age there is such an abundance that they are not valued as they should be. Like a great many other things—such as light, sleep, and health, which come to us regularly—they are so common we cease to recognise them as valuable blessings; we require to lose them to find out their worth; and had any of you lads been without books for months together, as I have, you would value them more, and never so far forget yourselves as to do them dishonour.

“I remember, many years ago now, being shipwrecked, and with half-a-dozen comrades cast up and left on a sand key in the West Indies. A few stunted bushes was all the vegetation the island, or key, afforded. No signs of animal life, save that of birds and tortoises, who resorted there to lay their eggs, could be seen; while, to make matters worse, not a drop of water could be discovered anywhere; thus we had the prospect of death from one of the most cruel of its agencies—namely, starvation.

“Some miles from our key, on either side, we could see beautiful islands all covered with vegetation, but

too far off for us to reach without a boat ; we often cast longing looks in their direction, while imagination pictured to herself how much more preferable our lot would have been had Providence seen fit to cast us up on either of those islands instead of the one on which we had found refuge.


“ You see, boys, although our lives had been mercifully preserved, we were not contented ; we regarded the mercy as being incomplete, because we had not been thrown amidst plenty. Human nature is never satisfied. Still, our lot was not an enviable one ; nevertheless, we set to work to make the best of it, and gathered together enough pieces of the wreck, which the sea threw up, to construct for ourselves a kind of hut as a protection from the blazing sun, while, by digging in the sand, we secured a sufficient number of tortoise eggs to last us, with care, for some little time, and once or twice we were so fortunate as to kill a tortoise ; but water was what we most of all wanted ; for although we ate many of the eggs raw, they did not sufficiently alleviate our thirst as a good draught of water would have done ; and I must say it was very tantalising to see water heaving and rolling all round us, and yet we dare not touch a drop.

“ At last, one of my unfortunate comrades, who had been much among the West Indian Islands, proposed digging a kind of well. He had known such a thing done before with success. We set to work, and with our hands, and bits of wood, after considerable

labour, were successful. Water rose into our well—which you may be sure was not very deep—and, although it was rather brackish, I never enjoyed drinking any so much before in my life. You only need be deprived of a blessing to understand its value.

“ But it was not so much about our makeshifts and hardships on our sand key that I intended speaking ; such accidents and mishaps are common in the lot of most sailors, and occur almost as a matter of course ; but what I wished to say was this, that among other things thrown up by the waves from the wreck was *part of a book*, a portion of Bunyan’s ‘ Pilgrim’s Progress ;’ the first few leaves were washed away, so also were the few last, and one or two gone from the middle. Torn and wet as it was, however, I seized the prize, for such I considered it, and carefully dried its leaves in the sun.

“ And never was a book, or the fragment of a book, prized so much before ; for we had nothing to do, and time hung heavy on our hands ; so we would light a fire at the entrance of our cabin or hut to keep off the mosquitoes, and there, by the hour together, we would read and discuss the adventures of the famous pilgrim, and I dare venture to say he was never so thoroughly read or appreciated before. I have often thought since it was the only thing which kept us quiet, made us bear our misfortunes, and our six weeks’ confinement on the key.



"Ah, boys, boys, if you are fond of books, you should be a sailor to understand what intense joy there is in sometimes reading a volume, however poor a one. But I expect things are a little different on board ship since my day—a ship without books is the exception now, and not the rule.

"I think of that and other circumstances in my life, and I don't like to see books ill-used. Many a time I enter a cottage, and am grieved to see books used to prop up a short-legged table, or a chest of drawers, when a brick would do equally as well; a true lover of books never degrades them by making them perform such menial services.

"A few years ago I spent an evening, and had supper with a literary gentleman—and a very pleasant evening I recollect it was; the gentleman had plenty of beautiful and wise things to say, and could utter them in a way which charmed and interested. During the evening he had occasion to refer to Coleridge's poems, from which he read something from the 'Ancient Mariner;' the book was afterwards laid on the table. When supper was brought in, and while being arranged on the table, the gentleman's wife, accidentally or thoughtlessly, placed a plate on the volume. The gentleman was all alive in an instant. Starting up with a cry of horror, he exclaimed, '*My dear! my dear! you are desecrating Coleridge!*' Such was his reverence for the man, and the book which contained some of his most beautiful

thoughts and conceptions, that he could not tolerate even a plate being placed upon it.

“Always treat books well. The Persians have a proverb that reads, ‘*Tread not on printed paper, for you may place your foot on the word God;*’ while the Chinese cherish such reverence for lettered or printed paper that they believe a man will be punished or rewarded in this life and in another world according as he uses or misuses it. One of their maxims runs thus:—‘*He who uses lettered paper to kindle a fire, will have itching sores;*’ another, ‘*He who in anger throws down on the ground any lettered paper, will lose his intelligence;*’ while a third reads, ‘*He who tosses lettered paper into dirty water, or burns it in a filthy place, will frequently have sore eyes, or become blind.*’ And it is quite a common proverb with them that ‘*Those who do not reverence lettered paper in this world, will be born blind when they come in to it a second time.*’

“If you boys were to walk through a Chinese town or city, you would see pasted up on the walls and houses slips of paper, on which are printed, ‘*Reverence lettered paper;*’ and underneath hangs a basket, into which people are requested to throw their waste paper; from whence it is gathered and burnt in furnaces built for the express purpose. On certain days all the ashes are collected into baskets, and carried in long processions, accompanied by bands of music, down to some river, upon whose waters they

are cast, and should the river be near to the sea, they row down to the mouth of it, and scatter them on the waves of the ocean.

“The Chinese are queer people, and do a great number of very foolish things, but I think we might gain a lesson from the way in which they reverence lettered paper ; I wonder now what they would have thought had they seen you boys kicking about the road a printed volume. They call books the ‘*eyes of the sages*,’ that is, the eyes of wise men, and sometimes speak of them as the ‘*tracks, or marks, which the sages have left behind*.’

“When books were scarce they were valued more than they are now. This is the age of pocket volumes ; years ago it was an age of folios, and books were too weighty to be kicked about, and too valuable to be ill-used ; Bibles were then chained in churches, and one man would read it aloud to many ; now, Bibles are so plentiful that each boy or girl may possess one, but I sadly fear they are not revered as much as they were in those far-away old days. Yes, yes, if there were to come a dearth of books how each volume would be treasured !

“In many a country village in England, in out-of-the-way hamlets in Scotland, and in mountain homes, books are still scarce. Why, I remember when I was a boy, Braintree did not possess so many as it boasts now, or if it did, they never by any chance came in my way ; I borrowed and read all the books

the neighbours round about my home possessed, which were not many, and not such light and attractive ones as you see in these days. And many places were worse off than Braintree.

“I remember hearing of a Scotchman who used to ride many miles over moors once a week, to hear a particular book read ; while a very great man tells us that in a remote village, where he resided for several years, he knew a blacksmith who by some means or other had got hold of an old novel, and in the long summer evenings he would read it aloud, while seated on his anvil, to a large audience, who followed the hero and heroine through all their adventures and misfortunes until the close, when the villain is defeated, and the happy couple are united in marriage. Throughout the whole reading the audience had listened attentively, and when the happy close was reached they shouted for joy, and, rushing pell-mell to the church, set the bells ringing to testify their joy and satisfaction. I think, boys, you would not have found those men ill-treating a book, surely never kicking one about the road.

“Well, well, I must not be too hard upon a thoughtless action, but sometimes thoughtless actions work much evil, so you had need always be careful ; yet the old proverb will always remain true, ‘*You cannot put old heads on young shoulders,*’ and it would not be natural if we could ; still, I like to see a boy careful, and he can be that without losing his buoyancy and

spirits, and I do like to see him careful over good things, and surely a book is one of the best of things.

“I should like to be able to implant in every boy a strong love for books, then I feel sure he would use them well, for if we once feel love for a thing it is surprising how tender and considerate we are of it. Of course, I do not wish you to cultivate a love for them to the exclusion of all other loves ; that would not be right, and might lead to serious consequences, for life is full of duties which carry us away from books, and to slight those duties would be wrong and unmanly.

“I remember, when once on a visit to the lakes, hearing the story of a lad, a native of the place — and since then I have seen the same story in print — who cherished a strong and passionate love for books. So great was his desire to obtain knowledge, that it seemed to absorb all other desires, and make the straight path of duty appear dark and crooked, so that he shrank from treading it. His great wish was to lead a student's life ; but his friends' means were too limited to enable him to gratify it ; they could only apprentice him to some honest trade, but of this he would not hear. The day before that on which his indentures were to be signed he took three of his best loved books, and spent the day among the mountains reading them. When the daylight faded, and the shadows deepened, and the first shafts of starlight glimmered in the sky, he swallowed a quantity of poison, and, using his books for a pillow, laid

himself down to die among those solitary hills, and beneath the silent and solemn sky.

“Boys, boys, that was a sad thing to do, but it was wicked and cowardly as well. Duty may be a rough, rugged, and toilsome road to travel, but it is the only safe road. If we shun it we are cowards. The proverb says, ‘*Duty is the only straight path.*’ All other paths, however, easy and pleasant, are likely to lead us into trouble, and danger, and sin. Why, if the poor lad had only considered, before he committed so rash and dreadful an act, he might have seen that no occupation can wholly divorce us from books. Men who have risen to fame and fortune by literature have frequently been men from the very lowest grades of society. ‘*To a willing mind nothing is hard.*’

“A glover’s apprentice in Edinburgh thought he should like to take a step higher up on the ladder of life, and resolved to qualify himself for some learned profession. The relations with whom he lived were exceedingly poor, so much so, indeed, that they could not even afford a candle and scarcely a fire at night. What was the lad to do? How could he acquire the knowledge necessary to the realisation of his wishes, when it was only after shop hours that he had leisure for study? But where the heart is willing the head is sure to contrive a plan. ‘*Where there’s a will there’s a way.*’ The lad used to take his book out into the street and plant himself at some shop window, the light from which enabled him to read; and when the

shutters were put up he would climb a lamp-post, and, holding on with one hand, read away as eagerly as before. That man lived to be one of the greatest Oriental scholars in the world, and the first book in Arabic printed in Scotland was his production.

“That is the kind of love for books I wish you to cherish—a love that does not shun the path of duty, but will overcome difficulties; for, as I have many times said, ‘*Love makes labour light*,’ and ‘*Love knows hidden paths*,’ and again, ‘*Love delights in self-sacrifice*,’ willingly foregoing ease and comfort for the loved object’s sake. Many a lad have I known go without his dinner to purchase a book, and then sit up throughout the night to read it.

“Did any of you boys ever hear or read of that strange, cross-grained, gnarled, and knotted piece of human nature that went by the name of William Cobbett? Well, perhaps not, for as a rule he is not very attractive to boys, although a truly extraordinary fellow in his way. But there is one incident in his early life with which all boys ought to be acquainted—although the acquaintance of the man may not be made till later on in life—it is where he tells us how he purchased his first book.

“He says that when about eleven years of age, and while employed in the Bishop of Winchester’s garden, he heard most wonderful accounts of the beauty of the King’s gardens at Kew, and he instantly resolved to work in those gardens; so off he set the next day,

with a few pence in his pocket, and no other clothes but those he had on at the time, to walk there.

"His way lay through Richmond, and in the afternoon of the day on which he set out he found himself trudging through that town, a rather curious object, in his blue smock-frock, and red garters tied round his knees. As he passed a bookseller's shop his attention was arrested by seeing a little book with the singular title of 'The Tale of a Tub,' 'price threepence' marked outside. Now all the money he had in the world was just threepence, and if he purchased the book he could have no supper; however, he did not hesitate long; in he went and bought the little book, and was so impatient to read it that he climbed over into a field, and sat himself down on the shady side of a haystack, opened his book, and read on until it was dark, without any thought of supper or bed; and when he could no longer see, he laid himself down by the side of the stack and slept until the birds awoke him the next morning.

"He kept that little book, 'The Tale of a Tub,' for many years, and when he accidentally lost it by its falling overboard in the Bay of Fundy, in North America, he felt more pain, he tells us, than he had since done in losing a thousand pounds. What is it some men and boys will not do to obtain books? What sacrifices will they not make, ay, and feel a pleasure and delight in making them?

"As I have before said, books are great blessings,

and should be valued as such. I should like nothing better than being able to create in every boy I know a love for reading ; that created and nourished is a great safeguard in life, a mighty power to restrain from evil. Most, or rather a great deal, of the sin and folly committed in the world is the result of so many vacant minds, minds unoccupied, minds which have nothing to think about, and so run into sin as a relief from the wearying monotony of life, finding pleasure in its exhausting and wearing excitement. Books, by occupying the thought and the imagination, will in a great measure prevent this. Cultivate, then, a love for reading. Read the best books, and read them carefully and with discernment, and you will come to regard them as honoured friends and loved companions, and, as some one has said, '*the souls who have made your souls wiser.*'

"You ought to thank God for books, because they may be used as helps and aids in the upward path ; help to carry you nearer to Him 'who spake as never man spake,' help to fit you to inhabit that mansion He has gone to prepare ; good books will do this if you use them rightly, but not bad books ; avoid them, shun them as you would sin ; it has become almost a proverb that '*A bad book is a great evil.*' I can't think how men have the conscience to write bad books ; in my way of looking at things, it is a fearful thing, and it is true what the proverb says, '*A bad book cannot repent ;*' the man may, but the book cannot, and goes on

working its evil. A bad book is sure to do a boy harm—as much, and perhaps more, as a bad companion. So beware, my dear boys, of bad books.

“There is just one word more I wish to say, and that is, in all your reading forget not to read daily the *ONE BOOK*, in which God has written down what He would have us do, and how He would have us live. I sadly fear in this age of books it is not read so much as it ought to be. I am afraid most boys think it dull. This is a very great mistake ; it is the most interesting book we have ; and, when we consider how important are the truths it teaches, we should make it our daily study to try and understand it, and regulate our conduct and lives according. Read your Bible. Its precepts should be the wings of youth to aid it in mounting upward in the morning freshness of life, before the troubles and battles of the world overtake them ; and they should be the staff of old age on which it rests while waiting to cross over the dark river. Read your Bible, my dear boys.

“And now I will say good night, and I hope I shall never see you kicking a book about the road again. Remember what I said, that books are great blessings, and he who ill-treats a blessing does not deserve to have one.”



CHAPTER XI.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING
DARKNESS.

“ ‘Fly!’ cries light to darkness; and darkness echoes back ‘fly!’ ”

“ Most men stumble in the dark.”

“ Ignorance is blind and cannot see.”

“ Ignorance like a fool commits many follies.”

“ Folly grows without watering.”

“ ‘Hold thy peace!’ says wisdom to folly; ‘Hold thy peace!’ replies folly to wisdom.”



CHAPTER XI.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING DARKNESS.

“**F**ELIX, did you ever see a ghost?” inquired Jem Mortlock one autumn evening, while a number of us were seated round the fire in Felix’s cottage, enjoying the pleasant warmth, for the balmy airs of summer had given place to the chill winds of autumn, which had turned the leaves brown, and were now stripping the branches bare. “Felix, did you ever see a ghost?”

“No, lad; I can’t say I ever did. I’ve seen a great many curious things, but I don’t think I ever saw a ghost. Why? What makes you ask?”

“Oh, I and my brother George had a terrible fright last night as we came round the churchyard wall. We had been down by Parson Scaley’s and through Hilly Gamp; and in coming back, not liking to pass through the churchyard, we skirted the wall, and came up by Martin’s house and the Malton; but before we reached

the latter place, my brother caught me by the arm with a hard grip, and in a trembling voice whispered, 'Look there, Jem !'

"I did look, and what I saw made me feel shaky all over. It was nothing more nor less than a ghost ! It was hanging over the wall, the two arms stretched wide apart, and every particle of it white. I own I was in a terrible fright, and my teeth chattered a bit as I, and George, stood watching it, and unable to stir a step. My brother George is no coward, I will say that ; but even he shook. After a time, however, he gave over shaking, saying. 'Well, Jem, this will never do. I mean to go right up and see what it is.' I wouldn't stir, so away he went, as bold as a lion, and without once hesitating or turning back, marched straight up to it, and seized it with one hand, while I stood anxiously waiting the result. And what do you think it turned out to be ? Why, nothing but an old shirt the sexton's wife had hung on the wall to dry and forgotten to take in. Still, I will own I was terribly frightened."

"I expect," said Lame Felix, "most ghosts turn out to be quite as harmless. It is in ourselves the fear lies. There is a proverb, which says '*No man need be afraid, for he is sure to find nothing worse than himself*,' but somehow or other men are afraid. Darkness maketh men afraid. A proverb says, '*Darkness maketh brave men cowards*,' which is true to some extent."

"I remember while in India, and when serving in

the East India Company's service, that a company of picked men were ordered off on some secret expedition. It was to surprise a fort then held by the rebels. The march was to be made at night, so that darkness might serve as a friendly cover, or shield, to hide their movements from the enemy. The men started off, eager and willing, and confident of success. It is astonishing how willing men are to engage in some desperate undertaking, where the chances are that few, if any, will return to tell what was done. The excitement and danger of the thing gives it the charm.

"Silently the men stole along, their leader at their head. No word was spoken ; nothing was heard save the steady tramp, tramp of the men, or the rustle of the herbage through which they passed. One portion of the way they had to traverse was an elevated ridge of land, quite bare of trees or undergrowth, where the men would be fully exposed to the enemy's view were any of them prowling about, for with the stars shining the darkness was not so intense as to hide them entirely. Increased caution was observed as the ridge was gained. As no sounds were heard all was thought to be safe, when, just as they reached the centre of the ridge, a loud report of musketry broke the silence, and several men fell, to rise no more. 'This way, my men,' shouted the leader, as he turned in the direction from whence the bullets came ; but as the men turned to rush on their

unseen foe, a second volley was fired, in quite an opposite direction. The men became bewildered; they knew not which way to turn, the enemy seemed to have surrounded them; the darkness added to their confusion, as it concealed their assailants and magnified their numbers. The men were brave men, but they became frightened, threw down their arms, and fled for dear life. It was not because they were cowards that they ran, for the same men had frequently attacked, and routed more than double their number; it was the darkness which kindled their fears, so that they fled panic-stricken.

“Many men who are brave enough by daylight are timid and fearful in darkness. It is the same with boys. The darkness hides the extent of the danger, or the magnitude of the peril by which they are assailed, while imagination, or a too lively fancy, increaseth it, so that they lose their presence of mind and fly from a danger which in broad day they would treat with contempt.

“Yet what should we do without darkness? It is one of the best friends mankind possesses. Its friendly gloom comes like a blessing. When night draweth her dark curtains over the earth, tired and wearied men and women find rest and refreshment in sleep. In the darkness they gather strength for to-morrow's toil.

“Once, while I was paying a visit to some of our great manufacturing towns, where such numbers of

people pass their lives in toil, I felt more grief than I can well express, to see the swarms of little children who were compelled to labour for their daily bread. Poor little things, it made my heart very sad to see how pale, and thin, and hollow-eyed they were ; how wearily they walked to and fro from home to work and back again, too tired, and too listless for play, nay, some too much so even to eat ; all the childhood was gone out of them, they were old before their time. I noticed one sharp-faced little creature who was lame, seat herself on a door-step to rest. I sat myself down by her side, and taking her wee little hand in mine, I inquired whether she was tired.

“ ‘Tired ?’ she said, ‘tired ? I always am tired.’

“ ‘What,’ I said, ‘don’t you ever get rested ?’

“ ‘No ; I can’t say as how I do ; on Sunday I lies down all day, but, on Monday, when the bell rings, I still feels tired like ; perhaps it is because I’m lame, but I don’t think it can be, for there’s Emma Gardner, who says as how she’s always tired like I am, and yet she ain’t a bit lame.’

“ ‘Well, why is it then ?’ I asked.

“ ‘Oh, I suppose it’s the work ; we do nothing but work, work, work ; even at night we sometimes seem to be working in our sleep.’

“ ‘Still you like night to come ?’ I said.

“ ‘I shall not soon forget her smile, as she looked up in my face saying, ‘Dark is the best part of the

day ; I wish it was always dark ; I hope it will be all dark when we die, then there 'll be no mills.'

" I carried the little thing home in my arms. I hope she is safe now, and completely rested in stronger arms than mine !

" Boys, fancy what a life such children must lead who regard darkness as their best friend ! Ah, many were the sad sights I saw at that time. Fancy seeing a long procession of such children as the one I have mentioned, parading the streets. Yet I saw such a one. Just as they left work they formed into ranks ; pale they were, stunted, and distorted, looking more like little spectres than children. I cried at seeing such a sight, and I was not the only one either, for many a man and woman wept sad, bitter tears as they passed by. It is a little better now, I am told, and it ought to be better still. Darkness to them was as light and sunshine is to the happy.

" A great many things that are lovely and precious grow out of darkness. The seed swells and bursts into new life in darkness ; flowers spring out of darkness. If it were not for darkness, we should never see any stars, and no one would ever have known how many worlds are above us. The bird in the darkened cage frets and complains because it sees no light, but during the darkness it learns its sweet song ; dew falls in the darkness, and parched and thirsty flowers receive new life ; the fuel which feeds this

warm and genial fire was dug out of the darkness, while the fire itself was concealed in the black coal. Life springs out of darkness, and passes through darkness before it can attain to a higher life. Sorrow is darkness, but it brings to light precious virtues. Darkness not only conceals, it reveals.

“But darkness is sometimes a cloak. The proverb says, ‘*Darkness is a cloak for sinners,*’ and truly it is so. If at night you found yourself in some vast tropical forest, you would hear the terrible howling of beasts seeking their prey. The darkness brings them forth, the light sends them back to their dens. And in towns and great cities at night, men who prey upon their fellow-men, issue forth from their hiding-places and prowl about to do their evil deeds—deeds which will not bear the light of day. They are the men concerning whom our Saviour said, ‘*They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*’

“Terrible deeds are done in darkness. When I was gold-digging in California, many years ago now, one evening my mate, with whom I worked—a quiet, inoffensive sort of a man, but a tremendous worker, took the boat which we possessed in common to row down the creek, which flowed past our plot, to get our week’s provisions. He had several miles to go to the store, and as it was somewhat late in the day when he set out, I urged him to be quick as possible, knowing how dangerous it was to be about after night-fall, owing to the many bad characters who constantly

prowled about the diggings, too lazy to work, but ever on the alert to rob ; and, if need be, murder those who were not. 'The hours crept on ; I sat inside my tent smoking, and reading a newspaper a year old. I began to think it was time that Fred—my mate's name—should return ; I got up and walked to the creek, but could hear no sound of oars, while it was too dark to distinguish anything a few yards off.

"I waited and waited, beginning to grow anxious ; it was long past the hour for returning. What could have become of him? Surely he had met with no accident? Yet, why so late? I lingered by the banks of the creek, half-determined to set out in search of him, and yet not liking to leave the tent, not knowing who might take a fancy to seeing its contents.

"While in this state of irresolution the silence of the night was broken by loud cries for help. Though the tones of the voice sounded like those of a man in great fear, and were raised to an unusual pitch, I instantly recognised them as Fred's, and immediately set off with a run to his assistance. The cries proceeded from a spot not very far from where I was standing when they reached my ears ; I heard some desperate struggle going on as I neared the place, half-stifled cries and exclamations, but before I could reach the scene of conflict, all was quiet. I looked about me, as you may well suppose, with a very apprehensive heart, scarcely expecting to see my comrade alive, and there, sure enough, lay his body, the head

immersed in water ; I dragged it out, and, as well as I was able, carried it to the tent. But it was of no use ; do all I could, poor Fred was past recovery—he had been most foully murdered. Terrible things does darkness hide.

“ But there are several other kinds of darkness besides that which arises from the absence of the sun, and which is not so terrible here as in the cold, ice-bound Arctic lands. There is a darkness which troubles man called, *Ignorance*. This is a sort of darkness which abides with all more or less. In past ages, if a man, by dint of hard thought and study, banished some from his mind, and struggled to a little mental light, he was called bad names and put in prison, nay, sometimes even tortured. Things are a little different now ; he who is ignorant is regarded with suspicion, and not he who is enlightened.

“ This ignorance is a bad darkness. Under its influence men do strange things. You heard only the other day of a number of men who destroyed Farmer Baines’ thrashing machines. Ignorance did that, whereby it did more evil than good. When labour is scarce and corn is dear, ignorance sets fire to corn-stacks to remedy the grievance, but makes it worse. Sometimes a person awakes in the night, and, by a peculiar smell, knows that the gas is escaping. Ignorance takes a candle to find out where, and the consequence is an explosion. Ignorance is a baleful darkness to be under.

“‘*Ignorance*, says the proverb, ‘*is the parent of much evil*,’ and, let me add, also of many ludicrous occurrences. I once heard of a sailor who stepped into a post-office, and, addressing one of the clerks, asked whether he knew Sam Worship of the Bull-dog, ‘for if you do,’ he added, ‘I want you to give him this letter.’ ‘No,’ answered the clerk, ‘but if you leave the letter it shall be sent to him.’ This surprised the sailor, who could not understand how it was the clerk could send a letter if he did not know the man to whom it was addressed. It was almost as bad as the country girl who wrote a letter to a friend, and because the post-mistress, who was very inquisitive, should not know to whom she had written, put no address on the envelope.

“I once knew a man who thought Africa joined Devonshire ; while, years ago, a fellow over there at Ardleigh, whom I knew, enlisted for a soldier, and when he reached Cambridge, thought he was in a foreign country, and with tears in his eyes exclaimed, ‘Farewell for ever, Old England !’

“Despise and dispel ignorance, boys. Now you are young is the time ; you have within your reach the great darkness dispeller. As at the face of the sun the darkness of night flies away, so at the sight of knowledge ignorance hideth itself. Strive to gain knowledge.

“But there is another and a worse darkness, a darkness which fills the heart. We call it moral dark-

ness, a much more fearful darkness than ignorance, bad as that is. The Bible says, that '*out of the heart are the issues of life.*' How necessary, then, to keep it full of light! You have no guiding light if the heart be dark; you are likely to fall into pitfalls and snares.

- "I knew a man who, while journeying in one of the Midland counties, lost his way among the heaths. Night came down, and he could not see which path to take, but he kept walking steadily forward. Presently he began to fear that if he walked much further, he should meet with some accident. He stood still, and shouted aloud 'Help, help, help!' It was some time before his voice was heard, but at length there floated to his ears an answering cry, and in the distance he saw a light approaching. He shouted again to guide the steps which were hastening to his relief. When at length the light was quite near, he saw how great had been his danger. At his very feet was the disused shaft of a mine. Had he but taken one step more, he would have been dashed to pieces. Yet his danger was not greater than is that of those who go on in life with a dark heart.

"In darkness poisonous weeds grow. In dark hearts poisonous thoughts and desires grow. Then, too, there is another consideration—the darkness of the heart leads to that fearful '*outer darkness,*' concerning which our Saviour speaks. I do not know what it means, but I have frequently pictured to my-

self a poor, wandering, homeless beggar, who some dark cold night has approached the window of a house, from which stream floods of light. He looks in at the window, and sees there a happy, cheerful family gathered round the blazing fire. He hears the merry laughter, he sees the bright faces, the sparkling eyes, and the expressive gestures of tenderness and love, and he says to himself, as the contrast strikes upon his heart, ‘How miserable I am! Would I had a home like this to enter!’ and he turns away in despair. May not the outer darkness mean something similar to that? If so, how dreadful it will be.

“Boys, boys, beware of all darkness which may lead to the outer. Strive, by God’s help, to make the whole heart full of light.”



CHAPTER XII.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING
WORK.

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"The morning hour has gold in its mouth."

"An idle brain is Satan's workshop."

"Idle folks lack no excuses."

"Idle folks have the most labour."

"Idleness is hunger's mother, and of theft full brother."

"Sloth is the way to poverty."



CHAPTER XII.

WHAT LAME FELIX SAID CONCERNING WORK.

TALKING up Hoppit Hill about noontime one very hot summer's day, I saw Lame Felix a little way on ahead, toiling along with his crutch, occasionally stopping to take off his straw hat, pass his handkerchief over his face, shake his jacket into ship-shape, and otherwise cool himself. I soon overtook him, and saluting him said—

“Hard work this, Felix.”

“Hard work!” he replied in his usual hearty tone, “hard work! why, there is no such thing as hard work. Hard work means lazy people.”

“Oh,” I exclaimed, “what a definition of hard work; I never heard such an one before; you surely don't mean it, Felix, do you?”

“Yes I do, lad; I think it's about as true a definition as I know. No work is hard to a willing mind. A proverb truly says, ‘*Sloth makes all things difficult, but*

industry all things easy.' Let work appear ever so hard, begin it with a will, and bravely, and it is speedily accomplished. '*The will is the soul of the work.*'"

"What do you say, Felix, of people who have work to do for which they are altogether unfit; don't you think they would say there was such a thing as hard work?"

"But, my dear lad, it does not follow that because the work is unsuited to the man, that therefore it is hard."

"Yes, I see what you mean," said I, after a pause.

"Here we are at the churchyard; let us come in and rest; I love sitting in a churchyard, it is so cool and quiet, all noise and bustle seems excluded from such a place; here is the end of work, and of life! No, not so; for do we not read that '*their works do follow them.*'"

We entered by the gate opposite Parson Scaley's house, and beneath the shadow of a tree seated ourselves upon a flat tombstone.

"Work," began Felix, laying his hat upon the grass, "work is the appointed lot of all; ever since the world began it has been so, and so it will continue unto its close. Everything has to work, everybody ought to work, a miserable man that one must be who tries to avoid it; to pass through life without doing something with hands, or head, or heart, is mean, cowardly, and dishonest. '*Labour has a bitter root, but a sweet taste,*'

says the proverb. He who works well, eats well, sleeps well, and lives well, and commands the largest amount of happiness. '*He who will not strive in this world should not have come into it.*' It is your idle, easy, striveless, do-nothing kind of people that fill the world with complaints and murmurs. Real workers, earnest workers, go on their way silently, and we only know of them by their works.

"Every boy should strive to acquire habits of industry. '*A young man idle, an old man needy,*' is a true proverb; see, then, how essential it is to acquire the habit of earnest working, for by so doing you are laying up provender for old age. Go where you may, you will find work is the law of life; these found it so who are lying so still and silent around us now; go into town or country, village or city, it is the same still.

"Little Daffydowndilly ran away from school because he did not like his schoolmaster, Mr Toil, whom he thought severe, harsh, and unjust; he determined to go where there was no work, no lessons, but where all was ease and play. But go where he might, he always saw a Mr Toil. He took an old, grave, and sedate looking man as his companion, and as they passed the meadow they saw Mr Toil making hay; when they peeped into the workshop they saw him planeing wood; he marched past them to the sound of fife and drum at the head of a regiment of soldiers; they found him dancing on the village green, and lazily slumber

ing under a hedge. So little Daffydowndilly said to his companion, 'take me back to the old school house, for go wherever I may, I find Mr Toil.' And so Experience, his companion, took him by the hand and led him back again to his schoolmaster, Mr Toil.

"So, if a boy thinks to go through life without work he will find himself woefully disappointed. All men have their appointed task, the poet says :

Who's born to sloth ? To some we find
The ploughshare's annual toil assigned ;
Some at the sounding anvil glow ;
Some the swift-sliding shuttle throw ;
Some studious of the wind and tide,
From pole to pole our commerce guide ;
While some of genius more refin'd
With head and tongue assist mankind.
In every rank, or great, or small,
'Tis industry supports us all.

"Learn to love work, my lad. In years to come you will find what a blessing it is ; it will help you to bear sorrow bravely, meet trouble with a bold front, and in a manly self reliant manner.

"There is no time like youth for acquiring any habit, and especially the habit of earnest persevering industry, the mind is fresh and ductile then, and more capable of receiving impression. The habit once thoroughly formed, is formed for ever, it will never leave you until the time comes when you will have done with work altogether, and enter into the quiet rest of the grave ; beyond the grave, in the new life,

you will have labour, but it will be labour without weariness.

“Nothing that is worth having but what has to be worked for, has to be gained by right down manful labour; men work in mines for coal and iron, gold and diamonds; food has to be worked for, and knowledge, and even pleasure; it is the law of life, is work. All laws that are broken entail punishment on those who break them; even so in this general law, you try to shun your rightful share of work, and the consequences will probably be indigence and want. ‘*He who begins ill, finishes worse,*’ says the proverb, and another reads, ‘*Idleness must thank itself if it goes barefoot,*’ for ‘*Sloth is the key to poverty.*’

“Even insects ought to shame a lazy man or boy; spiders have to weave a web before they can get a meal; ants lay up a store of food for winter use, and construct wonderfully ingenious habitations for themselves. ‘*Go to the ant, thou sluggard,*’ said the wise man. Bees make their cells, gather honey, and lay it by against the season of cold and dearth. Such dear little creatures as birds make their own nests, while animals have to search for their own food, and seek out their own dens. And man must do so likewise. The earth is very fruitful, but it must be cultivated; the ground must be ploughed and sown, before there can be any harvest, and the harvest must be gathered before there can be any bread. You see, lad, the law of work is universal, and the more

readily we adapt ourselves to it, the better it will be for us.

“I don’t like to see lazy boys ; I like active, cheerful, ready and willing ones, putting their hand to this thing, and that thing, and the other, never shirking a thing because a little labour is required, or a little self-denial requisite in its accomplishment. No one has ever risen to high position in life without hard work, without rising early in the morning, and working manfully throughout the hours of the day, and at times far into the night.

“ The heights by great men reached and kept,
Were not obtained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.”

And no one can ever hope to attain unto eminence without the constant upward toiling.

“One day,—in the beautiful spring time, when all the fruit trees were in lovely blossom, and birds were filling the air with song, and streams and rivers loosened from their winter ice, were running merrily along over their pebbly beds,—while wandering along in an old, old wood, I met a bright, active, and brave-looking prince, not splendidly dressed in silk and velvet, but somewhat soberly attired in dark cloth ; he carried an axe in his hand, and ever and anon I saw him swing this axe on high and bring down blow after blow in rapid succession upon the trunk of some tree, until the tree was felled to the ground ; then, after

wiping the perspiration from his brow, he would recommence upon another. I approached him. He was a bright-eyed, healthy-skinned, hard-handed youth.

"I said to him, 'How is it that you, being a prince, should labour like a peasant?'

"'True,' he replied, 'I am a prince, but my father, the king, who is called Industry, has a large family, and to each one he has given an appointed task in his great kingdom; and you will find one or another of us, somewhere or other, all the world over; we are the princes of Industry, and his children; to me he has given the task of working in the forest, and here I enjoy life, health, comfort, and happiness, and what more can I desire? Some of my brothers toil in mines, in the bowels of the earth for precious metals; some sail across the ocean in ships; some labour in workshops, in iron foundries, in libraries, in observatories, and some in counting-houses. Our father is a great king, and though his rule is strict, still it is wonderfully beneficent.'

"While the prince was speaking, I saw approaching a bare-footed, raggedly-dressed youth, with uncombed hair, dirty face, dull, fishy-looking eyes; he came shambling along, stretching and yawning at every step he took. Seeing him, one would say he had but just awoke from a long, long sleep. 'Who have we here?' I inquired of the prince.

"'Oh! this fellow,' said the prince, 'claims to be a relation of mine, a sort of cousin; but it is perfectly

untrue ; he has never been able to prove it, and until he can, neither I nor any of my brothers will allow the relationship. We sometimes give him a loaf of bread, or a little money, but we never admit him into our house, he is too unfit a companion for that ; let alone his dirt and his rags, he is covered all over with sores and boils, all arising from his dirty, lazy habits. He says his father is a king, King Sloth, I think, he is called ; but I have never seen him myself, my father has never cared to claim his acquaintance ; I am given to understand that he spends most of his time in bed, or lounging about his different rooms, and the gardens of his castle. He has rather a numerous family, but they are all characterised by the same family traits, dirt, rags, and disease.'

"Yes, Work is the brave, healthy, bright-looking prince, who, wherever he goes, carries innumerable blessings with him ; his presence makes the world brighter, gives a lovelier colour to the flower, a sunnier hue to the sky, a sweeter note to the bird, and a soothing balm to rest. He who never claims acquaintance and kinship with King Industry, loses no end of enjoyment, passes a miserable life, and goes down into a premature grave.

"When I was a lad, I knew a boy who had the misfortune to be an only son, and a greater misfortune of having well-to-do, indulgent parents. So careful were they of their Tommy, that he was allowed to have everything for which he cried that

could possibly be obtained. He loved the fireside, and never engaged in the health-giving recreations of his more active companions. He loved his bed, too. A proverb says, '*A lazy boy and a warm bed are difficult to part;*' Tommy never crept out of his until breakfast was nearly over, so he was almost invariably late for school; his parents did not like to hurry him, in fact he was very seldom at school, he disliked it too much, and his mother did not urge him to go, she was fearful that the application necessary to learn a lesson would give him a headache, or the stooping posture weaken his chest. There was only one thing Tommy did well,—he could not play, and when he ever attempted to join a game of cricket, or trap-ball, he could make no figure at it, he was too much afraid of hurting himself,—but Tommy could eat, and eat he did, as much at every meal as would have satisfied two boys possessed of ordinary boy appetites; he was never stinted, and consequently ate more than was good for him, which could be plainly seen in his dull-looking eyes, and unhealthy complexion.

"Years went on. It was time for Tommy to be put to some profession; but what profession would he suit was the question. He tried several, each of which he quickly threw up, the work was too hard. 'Poor boy,' said his parents, 'he shall never want while we have a crust in the cupboard, and a penny in the pocket.' So Tommy remained at home, spending most of his time in bed during the cold winter

weather, and slumbering out in the sunshine during summer. In a few years both his parents died, and Tommy was left to shift for himself, and a very shiftless fellow he was, I can assure you ; he soon made ducks and drakes of the little money his father had left him, and in a little time came to actual want, and knew not which way to turn to earn himself a crust of bread.

“At last he retired to the great house, the workhouse, where he very shortly died, and received a pauper’s burial. Such was Tommy, his life and his end, and very many, I am afraid there have been, and are, like him, poor coddled up shiftless pieces of human nature who are a disgrace to themselves, and encumberers of the world in which they drag out their miserable existence. Learn to love work, my boy, learn to love work.”

We left the churchyard together, but whenever I passed through it again, or through any other one, I remembered what *Lame Felix* had said concerning work.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARIAN DOVE, OR A FEW WORDS
ABOUT SORROW.

*" As darkness and doubt
Are the gateways of heaven,
So in sorrow and pain
An insight is given.
In dreariest wastes
Sweet flowers have their birth ;
To bring us the stars
The night curtains the earth ;
And all exquisite tones
That the ear ever heard,
Are but the deep groans
That the spirit has stirred."*

" Corn is cleaned with wind, and the soul with chastenings."



CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARIAN DOVE, OR A FEW WORDS ABOUT SORROW.


LAME FELIX had been visiting a home where sorrow had taken up its abode; he had done his best to help still the great pain in the heart, and dry the tears of the sorrowing ones. This visit had made him unusually serious and thoughtful. He sat by his blazing fire, watching the sparkling flames as they darted hither and thither—consuming wherever they went—and smoking his pipe in silence. Boy after boy had dropped in for his usual evening's chat, but, respecting the old man's mood, they had seated themselves in silence. At length the smoking came to an end, the ashes were knocked from the pipe, the pipe laid carefully on one side, and Lame Felix began to talk.

"Boys," he commenced, "boys, pain and sorrow are great mysteries; the more I think of them the

more mysterious do they appear ; and yet I think they lose a little of their mysterious character if we try to regard them as helps and aids towards an end, and not ends in themselves. If the gold could speak, it would cry out when it felt the hot breath of the fierce flames lapping it round ; but, when it has passed through the fire, how much brighter and purer it is, the dross is all burnt away, and nothing but pure metal remains. And so it will be with us ; we cry out when we feel the pain and the sorrow, and say we cannot bear it ; but, when it has passed away, it should leave us better and purer.

“Sorrow is a test ; as our worth is, so is our sorrow. Sorrow, more or less, is the portion of all ; and it is impossible, my dear boys, to go far on in life without receiving a visit from the dark, tearful-eyed angel of sorrow. It would be contrary to human nature and all experience were I to expect you to welcome her with open arms ; but, when she does come, as come she will, treat her well, and she will transform herself into an angel of light.

“Sorrow arises from many causes—from disappointment, blighted hopes, or the loss of those near and dear to us, whose defection and death is like a great wrench to our nature—a great tugging at our heart-strings ; but, from whatever cause it may arise, it comes to one and all, and leaves us better or worse. Listen, and I will tell you a fable, and do not despise it because a boy is not the hero. You may call it



“ ‘THE PARIAN DOVE,’

“In a gentleman's study, on a desk near the window, stood a beautiful Parian dove; its head was thrown back, its wings were outstretchèd, as though poising ready for flight into the blue depths of the sky.

“Behind, and on either side, books, arranged on shelves, reached from the floor up to the ceiling of the room, while others lay in confused heaps and piles on the carpet and on chairs. There were large, ponderous, and worm-eaten folios; generations of eyes, now closed for ever, had read their pages, and generations of fingers, long since crumbled into dust, had turned over their leaves; many active brains had pored over their contents, and innumerable hearts had gathered wisdom from them—wisdom that gave strength to character and beauty to life.

“The last beams of the setting sun, as they stole in through the window, illumined St Augustine's ‘City of God,’ or the mystical words of Jacob Behmen. Sunbeams playing upon such books suggested strange fancies to the mind of the dove; it would dream of the real city of God, which would be illumined by purer rays than those of the sun, and where, too, all mystical things would be made clear.

“In the hours of twilight, and through the hushed silence of the night, when the light of the moon, or of stars, shone into the room, the ideas and thoughts,

which were folded up in the pages of the volumes, seemed, to the imagination of the dove, to take to themselves shapes and forms, and, gliding silently about the room, would hold converse with it, and breathe into it some of their own wisdom, so that, in process of time, the mind of the dove became burdened with fancies and thoughts, and rich with the lore of poets and philosophers.

“At the close of an autumn day, when the wind had been boisterous, filling the air with red leaves, and driving masses of cloud across the sky, a maiden stepped into the study, not with an eager, buoyant step, but slowly, as though her limbs were clothed with heaviness. She was very beautiful, with masses of dark hair, some of which was twisted into a knot at the back of her head, while the rest fell loosely over her neck and shoulders; her cheeks were pale, and somewhat thin, either from sickness or sorrow; her brow was broad and white as marble, bringing into strong relief the finely marked and dark eyebrows, which shaded eyes whose brightness appeared to have been dimmed by tears, but from which the soul looked out upon the world. The mouth was small, the chin rounded and firm; altogether, the face conveyed the impression of character, and of a nature possessing great capacity for suffering.

“But the most noticeable feature of all was the lips. Lips are sometimes very pathetic—this young creature’s were so. It seemed as though her heart



Leaning her arms on the desk, she exclaimed wearily. "Oh! heart of mine, how dead, how dead!"—LAME FELIX, page 191.

was full of sorrow, which yearned to utter itself in words or passionate cries, but as constantly as it rose to make itself heard, so surely the lips restrained it, until the sorrow of the heart breathed into, and found expression in the beautifully-tremulous lips.

"Leaning her arms on the desk, and looking up at the clouds, which were assuming all sorts of fanciful shapes, and hurrying across the sky as though chased by some invisible presence that threatened their destruction, she exclaimed weariedly—

" 'Oh ! heart of mine, how dead, how dead !
The wind blows chill and drear ;
A spectre haunts deserted halls,
And numbs my soul with fear.' "

Then, laying her hand softly and caressingly upon the dove, she continued, using words thousands and thousands of wearied hearts have repeated, and are repeating every day—' *Oh ! that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away, and be at rest.*'

" 'Ah ! but the wings must grow before the bird can fly.' "

"Was it really the soft, cooing tones of the dove's voice, or was it the echo of her own thoughts? The maiden glanced down inquiringly at the bird. It seemed instinct with life ! She fancied she felt a tremor pulsate through the wings on which her hand rested. Startled at the strange occurrence, she whispered, 'What art thou, mysterious bird ?'

“‘I am the embodied aspiration of a sculptor’s soul,’ replied the dove.

“‘In what way?’ inquired the maiden, more surprised still.

“‘One night,’ said the dove, ‘sleep would not visit his eyes, for they were hot with unshed tears, and his brain was alive with thought, while his heart was restless with grief, for he had lost his dear ones, and their forms flitted constantly before his vision. As he tossed about on his bed, longing for rest and finding none, the strange fancy flitted into his mind that his soul was like a bird poising itself ready for flight. Rising from his bed, and selecting a rough piece of marble, with mallet and chisel he toiled through the night hours.

“‘When the morning light banished the stars, he had wrought out the fanciful conception of his brain. Exhausted with labour, he exclaimed—

“‘My soul is indeed like thee, ready to fly away and be at rest.’

“The maiden reflected for a moment, and then said, ‘Did you experience pleasure in growing from a senseless piece of marble into a beautiful dove?’

“‘All growth is pain,’ replied the dove. ‘I murmured and repined under the master’s hand, not knowing for what end I was destined.’

“‘Am I murmuring?’ mused the maiden. And then to the dove—‘But why should growth be pain?’”

“Growth is a proof of imperfection, and all growth into higher and more perfect life is pain.”

“But all pain is not growth.”

“No ; for sometimes pain is punishment, the consequence of folly or sin ; but the deepest pain is experience, and experience is but another name for growth.”

“The maiden said within her own soul, ‘This is very strange ! Will the pain and sorrow I am now enduring transform me into another being ?’

“Nay ; it will but develop your true nature,’ said the dove, as though conscious of the thoughts passing through her soul.

“But why should I suffer ?’ cried the maiden, piteously. ‘Before this great sorrow entered into my life I was happy. I went about joyously, full of freedom and delight. The world, in my eyes, seemed fresh and fair, and beautiful. Human loves and human friendships were very precious to me. Now all is changed. I see the world through other eyes, or, if the same, some enchanting veil has been torn from them. Why should I suffer ? Others do not.’

“I have heard,’ said the dove, ‘that if a man or woman were to pass down some streets, every house would appear pleasant and agreeable to the eye ; but but if the front was taken from each, or the roof raised, they would find within crying children, weeping women, and suffering men. So, likewise, could we

but pierce into the recesses of every heart we should find sorrow and suffering were constant guests. No life can be free from pain ; it is the law of our being, and the highest natures, natures capable of becoming sublime, are subject to the deepest sorrow and pain.'

" ' Vainly you talk,' cried the maiden, despairingly. ' I did so love him ! Sorrow can never do for my soul what he could have done. He would have ennobled me more than ever I can be without his aid. He was perfection in my eyes. His life was so full of promise, he made mine full likewise. He made the world full of light and sunshine ; his absence has taken it away. Dead ! dead ! My life must be one long grief. Hope has taken to itself wings and flown away ; the sunshine has vanished out of my heart ; I am weary and broken in spirit ; my days are full of evil, and I find no comfort in them.' And, laying her head upon the desk, she wept bitter tears.

" The dove let her weep on, and when her grief had somewhat exhausted itself, said ' But there is *higher love than human*—a love more unselfish, more lofty, and more enduring, which, when we have attained unto, will enable us to endure all suffering and sorrow, for this love will transform them into joys ; and the proof that you are capable of reaching unto it lies in the fact that the lesser has been taken away.'

" ' I suffer, I suffer,' murmured the maiden. ' Your

words give me no consolation ; pain, with her burning fingers, holds my soul in her hand. I sorrow for the beautiful dead.'

" ' *Tis held that sorrow makes us wise.* "

said the dove ; ' in time you will look back upon this great grief, and feel it to have been a blessing draped in mourning.'

" ' Never, bird, never ; my heart is buried with him, Oh, why did he die ? '

" ' Would you that he should have lived and proved unworthy of your love, or that the grave should receive him in the fulness and flush of promise ? '

" ' Why ask so needless a question ? ' replied the maiden. ' My grief would have been despair had he proved unworthy ; but such a supposition is folly, he could never have become worthless.'

" ' Who can tell ? ' murmured the dove ; ' the grave has hidden many a young creature full of promise, whose life would have been full of evil had he lived. *No death is a caprice.* '

" ' Your words are cruel,' said the maiden sobbing.

" ' Life is full of cruel things,' replied the dove, sententiously ; ' as we go on our way, bright hopes we have cherished fall from us, and are blown hither and thither, as dead leaves are blown against this window by the wind ; pleasure accompanies us for a

moment, but pain dogs our footsteps ready to strike us unawares ; disappointment hovers over us like a bird over its prey ; friends fall around us, and we see them no more, and we cry in the anguish of our soul, Who shall show us any good ? But all these things should be received as soul lessons, *for life is the soul's school*, which is being educated for a higher destiny. You are but on the threshold of life, standing face to face with your first great grief.'

" 'But what is to be the end of it all ?' said the maiden.

" Purification of soul. Believe me, life is something more than pleasure ; it has noble duties and noble ends, which cannot be achieved or attained but by labour and pain, and much sorrow of spirit. I am not yet ready for flight ; my wings require more pluming ; but I look up into the sky where lies the unknown country whither I am going. You have an unknown country to look forward to, where dwells your great Master, who is training you to make you fit for your future home. You think His training harsh and cruel, but He knows best, and love is His character. What is the noblest gift He can give you, but the privilege of being sacrificed for the best and greatest end. Perhaps, maiden, He is using you for the best and greatest end. And if He sends sorrow, He also sends consolation, and for every apparent loss, He has glorious compensation.'

" The dove ceased speaking, relapsing into silence ;

the maiden questioned, but received no further answer. Surprised, she touched its head and its wings. The life, which to her eyes and touch seemed to animate it, had gone. A cold piece of marble only answered to her touch.

“Pondering in her heart the many words the dove had spoken, she retired to the sanctity of her own room ; but her soul was still troubled, and full of grief. She felt she required a higher strength than her own to overcome her pain and complaint. Kneeling at her bedside, she stretched out her hands in mute supplication ; her silence, more expressive than many words, was her prayer. After a time calmness entered her soul ; her grief, though not lost, was hushed into stillness, for an invisible presence breathed its influence upon her. Rising from her knees, she took her pen, and wrote her unuttered prayer—

“ ‘ If with contrite tears I seek Thee,
Clasp and bathe Thy feet,
Will Thy loving smile forgive me ?
And Thy mercy sweet
Be a strength on which to rest ?—
Be a power to make me blest ?

“ ‘ I am weary, oh ! my Saviour,
And my heart needs rest ;
If I come, in faith believing,
Shall I then be blest ?
Will all storms of passion cease,
And my soul have calm and peace ?

“ ‘If it is so, dearest Saviour,
I will gladly come ;
For I wander here so lonely,
And I long for home.
But my soul is sore distressed,
Heavily with fears oppressed.’

“My dear boys, I hope I have not been talking about things too hard for you to understand. I fancy they will not prove so if you think over them a little. I want you to know that there are such things as pain and sorrow in the world, that sooner or later it will be your turn to endure them, and great will be your reward if at that hour you know where to turn for help. No pain or sorrow is sent, or inflicted, at hazard ; the good God is too wise ; every sorrow is for some wise and pure end. Think, my dear boys, think, and what I have said will not appear too hard.”

This was one of the last talks of *Lame Felix* that I remember to have heard. I hope that some things he has spoken may not only amuse my young friends, but instruct them likewise. *Lame Felix* has been dead many years now ; strangers live in the cottage he was wont to occupy, while his name is fast becoming a memory only. For several years after his death the boys to whom he had so frequently spoken, took it in turns to keep his grave well supplied with flowers ; but after a time it became neglected, for each one had to go out into life, away from *Braintree*, to fight his own battles. I do not think, however, that all *Lame*

Felix said was wasted ; but many and many a time, in seasons of temptation and danger, have his warnings and counsels occurred to my mind ; and if to mine, there is every reason to believe they have been of service to others, and I hope they will prove so to all who read those pages.



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